

NUMBER ONE MAGAZINE FOR CANAL AND RIVER HISTORY

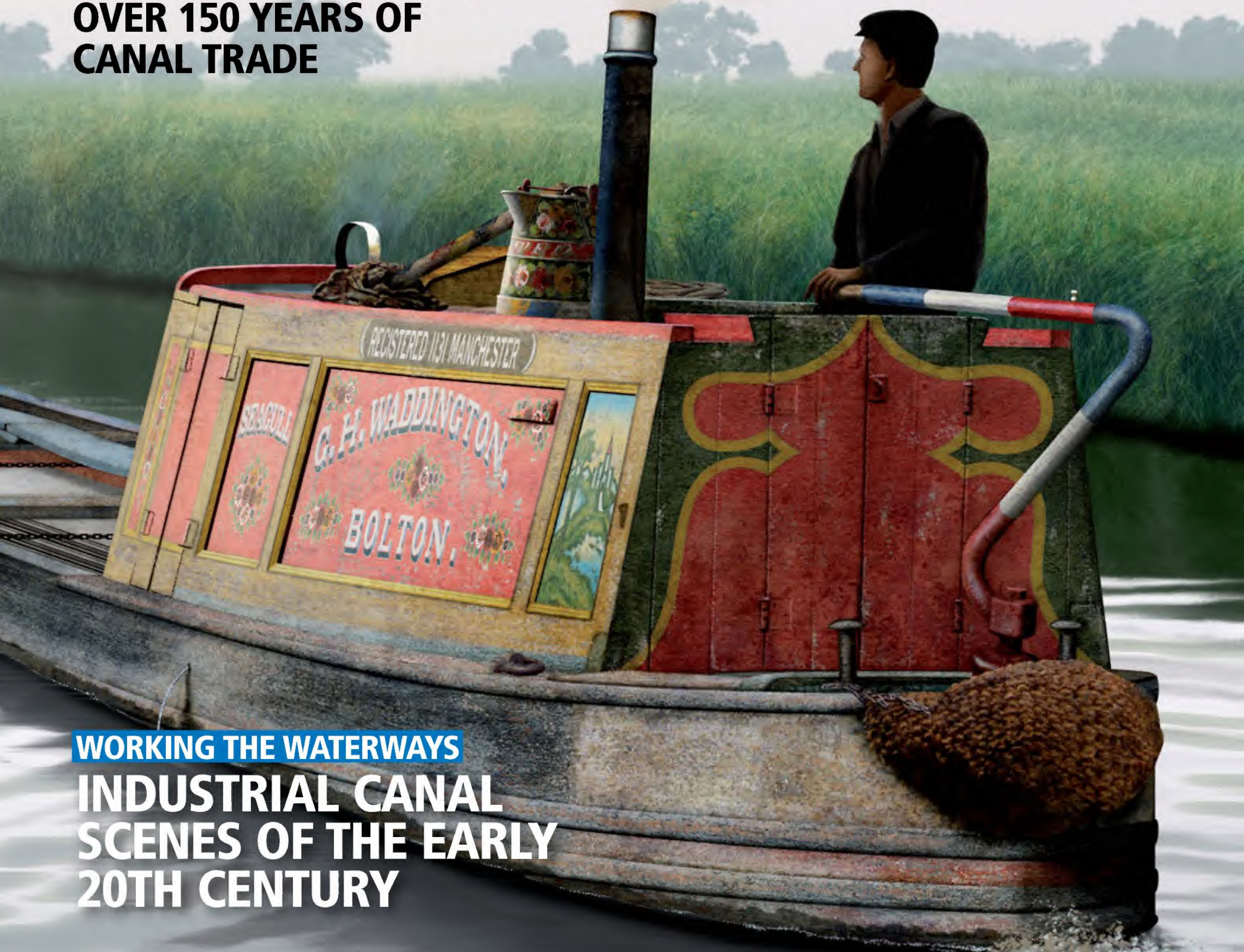
The Inland Waterways Heritage Magazine

# NARROWBOAT

Spring 2019 £6.99

**BOATING TO  
BRAUNSTON**  
OVER 150 YEARS OF  
CANAL TRADE

**CANALS THAT NEVER WERE**  
**WATERWAY PROPOSALS IN**  
**NORTH YORKSHIRE**



**WORKING THE WATERWAYS**  
**INDUSTRIAL CANAL**  
**SCENES OF THE EARLY**  
**20TH CENTURY**

**GORDON HALL**  
**WADDINGTON**

**THE NORTH-WEST CARRIER OF THE 1950S**





The Inland Waterways Heritage Magazine

# NARROWBOAT

## Explorations at Braunston

This month we devote several pages to Braunston, the Northamptonshire village at the junction of the Grand Union and Oxford canals that, although little known outside of the world of our waterways, has a claim on being the capital of England's canal network.

Certainly during the era of commercial-carrying it was a popular stopping-off point for working boaters, not only on account of its location at the intersection between two well-plied routes, but its wealth of canalside supplies and facilities. But, as we explore, it was also an important destination for cargoes that supplied local traders and, as we promise to investigate fully in the Summer issue of *NB*, a prominent centre of boat-building.

I always enjoy visiting Braunston as the canal there retains many of its links with its past – not least in the form of its original waterside buildings and Horseley Iron Works bridges, but also its continuing boating activity. Indeed, the last time I was there, I had the pleasure of watching the working pair *Raymond & Nutfield* (which are moored at Braunston Marina) passing through the locks. By squinting a little, it was possible to imagine I was watching a scene from 70 years ago. Having gleaned much more information about the place on reading Chris M. Jones' historical profile (starting on page 8), I'm now anticipating a return visit to look over the scene with fresh eyes.

Finally, some of you may have noticed the small increase in the cover price of this issue. Although this is in line with inflation, the good news for current Direct Debit subscribers is that we're keeping your rate the same until 2020. Don't worry, we'll write to you nearer the time to notify you of the change in amount.

**Bobby Cowling, Editor**



**Front cover:** On a misty spring day Gordon Hall Waddington's motor *Seagull* is loaded with aluminium and being worked single handed. She was built by W. J. Yarwood & Sons Ltd at Northwich for carriers W.H. Cowburn & Cowpar Ltd of Manchester in January 1935. Her hull was all steel with a wooden cabin and she was fitted with a long cylindrical tank to carry carbon disulphide to Coventry and Wolverhampton. This chemical traffic ceased in June 1951 and *Seagull* was bought by Gordon Waddington the following September, then put to work mainly on the coal traffic between Worsley and Runcorn gasworks after Yarwoods had removed the large tank from her hold. She was never used again after suffering engine damage in 1959, and was later sold off to be re-engined and used as a pleasure craft.

**Specially drawn for *NarrowBoat* by Christopher M. Jones**

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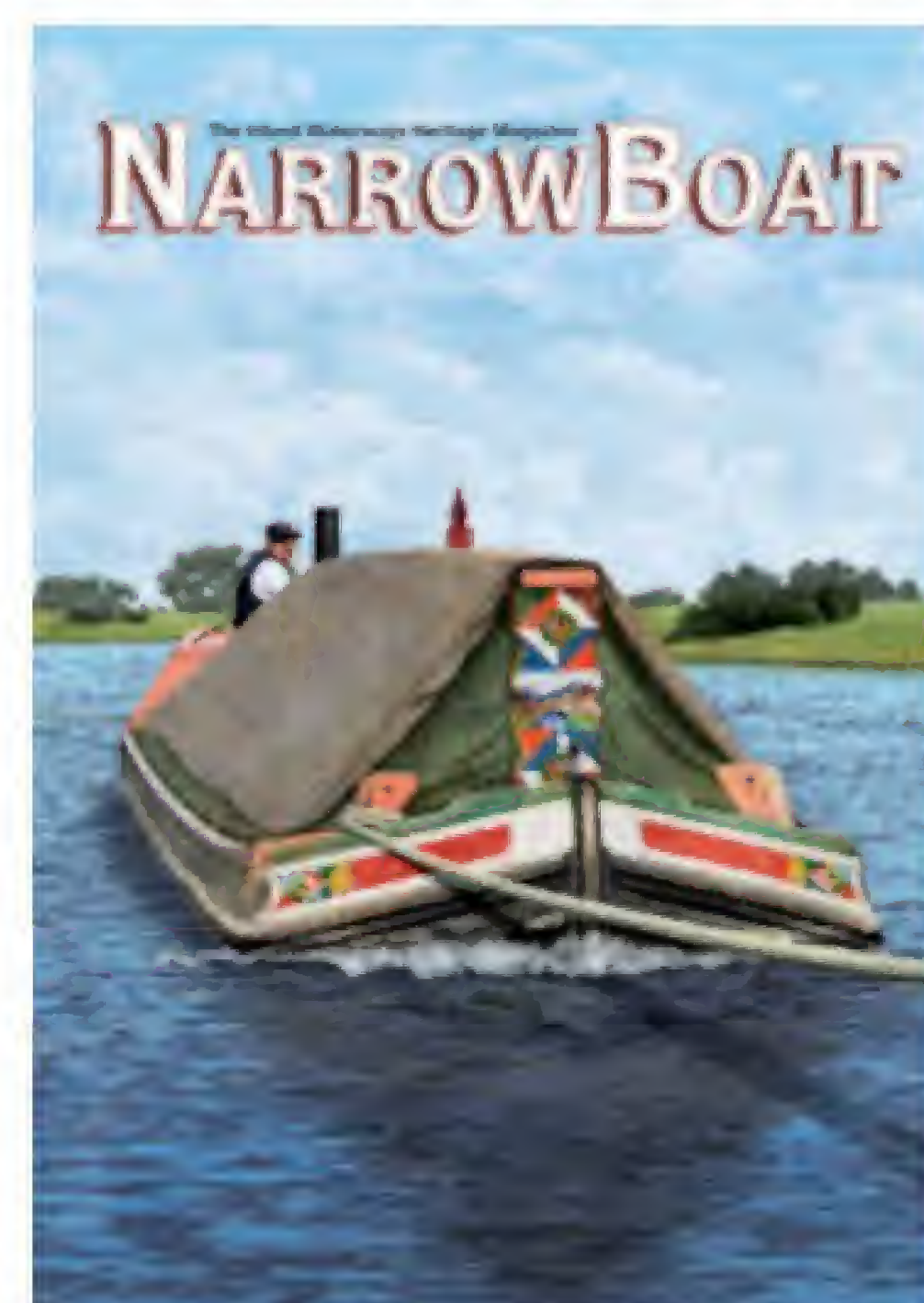
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**In the SUMMER 2019 issue on  
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### WORKING THE WATERWAYS: Severn Traffic to and from the Industrial Midlands

Chris M. Jones studies the various trade and traffics between Gloucestershire and the industrial Midlands via the River Severn

### PICTURING THE PAST: Boating on the Trent & Mersey

We delve into the colour photo collection of Jack Parkinson to take a look at post-WWII traffic on the Trent & Mersey Canal

### HISTORICAL PROFILE: Boat-building at Braunston

Chris M. Jones reveals the history of boat-building in the Northamptonshire village of Braunston during the canal-carrying era

### WORKING THE WATERWAYS: Rebuilding the Warwick Canals

An interesting series of slides show the reconstruction of the Warwick canals in 1933 during an inspection trip by the Grand Union Canal Company





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## GORDON HALL WADDINGTON



Gordon Hall Waddington started work in the Manchester offices of Lancashire Associated Collieries after leaving school at the age of 15. By the start of World War II, the offices had been transferred to the former offices of the Bridgewater Collieries in the Duke of Bridgewater's home, Worsley Old Hall. After the war, Waddington decided to go into business himself, based at Bolton in Lancashire.

Having gained experience working in the transport and shipping section of the colliery office he decided to set up as a canal-carrier, forming a partnership to raise the necessary capital.

### Getting started

The first three boats that Waddington acquired for the new venture were wide-beam vessels. *Doris* was an

ex-Leeds & Liverpool steam-powered short-boat purchased in 1948, which was brought from Leeds to work on the Bridgewater Canal. Two wooden wide-boats named *Kestrel* and *Panther* were also bought in 1948, from Crook and Thompson. The plan was for them to work as dumb boats towed behind *Doris*, handling the coal traffic between the Boothstown and Marsland Green tips and Runcorn gasworks. However, the dumb boats "leaked like riddles" and were almost immediately sold for scrap at £2 each. They were broken up by James Grogan at Potato Wharf, Castlefield, Manchester. The steamer *Doris* was sold soon after to boat-builders T&W Wells of Longford Dock, Stretford, which rebuilt the vessel and operated it for several years as a day-boat.

Gordon Waddington's pair *William & Sirdar* with George Page in command, winding at Runcorn following another delivery of coal to the gasworks.  
**Jack Parkinson Collection**

After this troubled beginning, Waddington's business partner withdrew from the partnership. About a year later, Waddington made a fresh start, purchasing the first of a series of second-hand narrowboat motors and butties. The first was the 1926-built wooden motor *Harry*, which was acquired from Ovaltine manufacturer A. Wander Ltd of King's Langley on 5th May 1950. She was renamed *Joyce* a few months later and was put into service running coal to Runcorn gasworks. Waddington had no butty to work with her, so he hired the National Coal Board's box boat No 74 and Simpson Davies' *Dora*.





Two of Gordon Waddington's motors are tied up with full loads of coal at Lymm Bridge on the Bridgewater Canal on 27th October 1957. The one nearest the bank is the ex-Cowburn & Cowpar *Swan*. Behind is the wooden deep-draught Simpson Davies motor *Alice*, showing the difference between the traditional narrowboat of the Bridgewater Canal and a wooden motor from the Grand Union. Bridgewater boats like *Alice* were very old when this photograph was taken; this vessel was built in the 1870s and was later converted to a motor. **Peter Norton**

### Expanding the fleet

Another motor called *Seagull* joined the small fleet in July 1951 from canal-carriers W.H. Cowburn & Cowpar Ltd of Trafford Park, Manchester. This was a steel craft, built by W.J. Yarwood & Sons Ltd early in 1935, and was fitted with a 12hp Gardner engine. It came with a wooden butty, *Sirdar*, which dated from 1929 and had been owned by Potter & Son of Runcorn. The pair had been fitted with large cylindrical tanks for carrying carbon disulphide to Coventry and Wolverhampton, a traffic that had finished in June 1951. The tanks were removed by Yarwoods so the vessels could be used in the coal trade. *Seagull* also came with its own crew, Arthur Meredith and his family. *Sirdar* was the only butty owned by Gordon Waddington at that time, and it wasn't until the following year that more boats were added to his growing fleet.

In June 1952 another pair of vessels was bought from British Transport Waterways at Bull's Bridge. These were wooden craft built by Fellows, Morton & Clayton at its Uxbridge boatyard: motor-boat *Seal*, built in 1920, and butty *Aire*, built in 1917. *Seal* had no engine fitted, so both craft were towed by BTW to L.B. Faulkner's dock at Linslade, where a 9hp Bolinder semi-diesel was fitted by Gordon Waddington, Gordon Atkins and George Bailey. The engine had been bought from the Mersey Weaver & Ship Canal Carrying Company. Once the work was completed, the pair set off for the Lees & Atkins boatyard at Polesworth for further docking work. *Seal* was renamed *Enterprise* and *Aire* was renamed *Endeavour*, but on closer inspection *Endeavour* was found to be in poor condition and not fit for work. She was sold to Lees & Atkins



On a sunny summer day at Lymm a pair of Gordon Waddington's boats wait before proceeding to Runcorn gasworks. On the right is the ex-GUCCC Royalty-class motor *William*, with an ex-FMC butty on the left, which could well be *Gladys*. Note how the box mast has been repositioned, almost to the forward beam, similar to other butties in Waddington's fleet. **W.E. Brown**



*William* & *Sirdar* running light through Worsley at a fair speed in 1959, with the Bridgewater Collieries coal chute just ahead on the right-hand bank. The spire of St Mark's church can be seen in the distance. **Jack Parkinson Collection**



# Famous fleets



Gordon Waddington's motor *Swan* running light back to the collieries on the Bridgewater Canal in April 1959. *Swan* was formerly part of the fleet of W.H. Cowburn & Cowpar of Manchester. **Waterway Archive**



In this image from April 1959 the attractive decorative paintwork of the Lees & Atkins dock at Polesworth is clear. Gordon Waddington himself steered *Swan* on occasion. **Waterway Archive**

and left at its dock to sink. Fortunately, Waddington had a newly repaired butty with a new cabin already at the Lees & Atkins dock, which he had also bought in June 1952 for £200. This vessel was due to be renamed *Gertrude*, after Waddington's mother, and would be signwritten in his livery. *Gertrude* was one of a pair, and Waddington decided to buy the second butty, which also had a new cabin, for another £200 to replace *Endeavour*. He renamed this boat *Gladys*. Both *Gertrude* and *Gladys*, which were of iron composite construction, had originally been built for FMC by Braithwaite & Kirk of West Bromwich, and had been owned by the Samuel Barlow Coal Co before passing to Lees & Atkins.

Gordon Waddington acquired another motor on 15th September 1952, this time from L.B. Faulkner. It was originally *Charles* and was built in 1928 for Wanders, and Waddington renamed it *Galatea*. This small fleet, consisting of three motor-and-buttoy pairs and a single motor, remained unchanged for several years, although repairs and improvements were made. *Joyce* was taken to Lees & Atkins at Polesworth in March 1953 to have a new cabin fitted, and she was renamed *Rita* in April 1953.



Gordon Waddington's motor *Swan* is running light along the Bridgewater Canal through Moore after another trip to Runcorn gasworks on 10th December 1960. On this occasion Gordon himself is steering. **WW Archive**



### Accidental damage

Although Gordon Waddington used different boatyards from time to time, he seems to have favoured Lees & Atkins, which, given its location – far away from his normal traffic on the Bridgewater Canal – was an awkward decision. This was highlighted by the saga of the motor-boat *Swan*, which Waddington purchased from Cowburn & Cowpar. The steel composite craft had been built by Yarwoods in 1933 and was fitted with a 12hp Gardner semi-diesel engine. It had been used on short-haul coal traffic until October 1956, when Cowburn & Cowpar ceased coal carrying on the Bridgewater due to the declining profitability of canal transport and the retirement of one of its long-serving boatmen, who had steered *Swan* since new. Because of its poor condition, Gordon Waddington sent the boat to Lees & Atkins to be docked.

There followed an eventful trip to Polesworth, undertaken by Bill Atkins and Albert Shaw, which began at Runcorn on a Friday night after unloading at the gasworks. After ascending the Cheshire Locks, the two men positioned a plank on the cabin top to protect the corner from the low roof of Harecastle Tunnel. They set the engine throttle control to maintain a constant speed and went into the cabin for a cup of tea as *Swan* progressed through the tunnel. Suddenly the boat came to a dead stop, throwing both men forward against the cabin bulkhead separating the cabin from the engine room. *Swan*'s forward engine-room bulkhead had hit some broken brickwork in the tunnel arch and broken the plank, and the engine room roof had been damaged, with the slide being thrown into the canal. This was retrieved, and on continuing their journey and exiting the tunnel, the boatmen saw that the engine room roof was bent back. Clearing the broken brick and timber debris, they continued to Polesworth.

Several months later, once the docking was completed, including replacement of the cabin side, roof repairs and repainting, Gordon Waddington went to pick up the boat from Polesworth himself, as his boatmen were busy on the coal traffic. He found he could not pump fuel from the large tank into the day tank. The damage at Harecastle had affected



*Galatea* towing butty *Sirdar*, under the command of Bill and Ada Atkins, passes through Worsley after loading at Boothstown, on the way to Runcorn gasworks. **Jack Parkinson Collection**



George Page steers *William* past the Watch House, Stretford, towing *Princess* towards Runcorn in 1961. Being a wide and deep canal, the Bridgewater was ideal for narrowboats to take on a full load, as shown here. Royalty-class boats like *William* were some of the largest narrowboats built, and this canal allowed the motor to take aboard a volume and weight of coal not possible on other canals.

**Jack Parkinson Collection**



Being a smaller craft than her motor *William*, star-class butty *Princess* was easily able to take a full load. George's wife Dolly is at the tiller. Notice the towing mast and case has been repositioned closer to the fore-end beam, and the top planks shortened and lengthened to fit. All of Waddington's butties were adapted like this. Her bow wave indicates the speed. **Jack Parkinson Collection**





Coal was not the only cargo carried in Gordon Waddington's boats. In September 1962 motor *William* and butty *Princess*, captained by George and Dolly Page, carried large slabs of aluminium from Liverpool to Wolverhampton for manufacturing into kitchen foil by the Star Aluminium Co. Here they are tied up at Market Drayton waiting for British Waterways to finish dredging the bridgeholes and raise the weir levels as boats had been getting stuck. Note the converted ex-working boat on the wharf in the distance; this is *Alice*, formerly owned by J&G Meakin of Hanley, which features elsewhere in this issue.

**Max Sinclair**

some of the rivets in the large tank, setting up a small fuel leak, and during the time *Swan* was docked all the fuel had leaked away. Further repairs were made, and *Swan* eventually returned to the North West.

## An established fleet

Several boaters and their families worked for Gordon Waddington over the course of time. Arthur Meredith came with *Seagull* and *Sirdar*, and was later replaced by Sydney Beck. He in turn was replaced by Richard and Alice Preston, while Dennis Beck steered *Joyce* and *Gertrude*. Sydney Beck and his family later took over *Galatea* and *Gertrude*.

Another motor-boat was added to the fleet in July 1957: *William*. Originally built by Yarwoods for Associated Canal Carriers Ltd of Northampton, the vessel had been completed in 1932. It was a deep-draught Royalty-class boat built of copper-bearing steel and, before the sale to Waddington, it had been operated by an owner-boatman while being owned by the National Coal Board from 1949. NCB used it to tow a flat carrying 50-tons from Bickershaw Colliery at Plank Lane to Barton Power Station. After being laid up at Worsley in October 1956 due to engine problems, the vessel was sold to Gordon Waddington by May the following year, and the engine was rebuilt by Bill Atkins shortly after.

Only two more boats joined Waddington's fleet thereafter, both butties originally built by Harland & Woolf of Woolwich in 1935 for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Co as small Woolwich Star-class boats. The first was *Princess*, which was originally named *Cetus* and had passed through several owners, the last being the Samuel Barlow Coal Co, which sold her to Waddington in August 1961 for £205. He also bought the butty *Uranus* from Barlows for £280.

## Contracts and traffics

Waddington's fleet was based at Butt's Basin in Leigh, between Hall House Bridge and Butt's Bridge, within an hour's run of the loading tips at Worsley, Boothstown or Marsland Green, which were all served by the Bridgewater Collieries Railway. A small workshop was set up there, together with the diesel fuel tank. The most important traffic carried washed slack from Boothstown or Marsland Green to Runcorn gasworks between Bates Bridge and Delph Bridge, the coal originating from the washery at Astley Colliery in both cases. This amounted to about 1,200 tons a month at its peak in the mid-1950s. A second contract called for coal to be carried from Worsley to Beatties at Castlefield in Manchester, in tonnages varying from about 400 tons a month in high summer to a maximum of 1,195 tons in October 1955. Traffic and loading arrangements usually meant that a pair of boats working to the gasworks would only load every other morning, but those working to Castlefield could manage a trip every day.

Waddington shared the Runcorn gasworks job with another carrier,





Another view of *William* and *Princess* waiting at Market Drayton Wharf in September 1962. Shortly after this photograph was taken Gordon Waddington's carrying activities came to an end and all his boats were laid up and eventually sold off. **Max Sinclair**

the old established Runcorn business of Jonathan Horsefield Ltd. His boats were usually the traditional Bridgewater narrowboats, six planks deep, and worked as motors and butties. They also operated from Marsland Green loading tip, carrying washed beans to the gasworks.

Gordon Waddington secured several other contracts, mostly for coal, with the least popular being a twice-yearly trip from Bickershaw Colliery at Plank Lane, on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal's Leigh Branch, to the crane at Runcorn docks. This called for a pair of boats to carry steam coal. The boatmen disliked the trip because the exposed position of the Plank Lane tip made it difficult to position the boats for loading due to the wind, while unloading involved travelling down Runcorn Locks, followed by a very slow discharge. All this, combined with the fact that Waddington paid the boatmen the same tonnage rate as they received on the gasworks contract, made the trip, which they took turns to carry out, a very poor economic proposition for the boatmen.

Very little work was done off the Bridgewater Canal, except to and from

the Lees & Atkins dock at Polesworth, when china clay might be taken from Weston Point to Stoke or spelter to Wolverhampton for the Mersey Weaver Company. A return cargo of chippings or pebbles might be obtained from Trentham for delivery to the Trussed Concrete Steel Company at Trafford Park, Manchester, which was an ideal cargo as it brought the boats almost back to the collieries.

### The end of an era

In 1961 the Bridgewater Canal celebrated its bicentenary and Gordon Waddington was represented at a rally at Worsley by boaters George and Dolly Page on his newly acquired boats *William* and *Princess*. However, the fleet was not expanding. *Seagull's* engine had been damaged in 1959 and was never repaired. It was sold to an owner from Leigh who replaced the engine and operated the craft as a pleasure boat. Late in 1958 the butty *Gladys* had been sold to the Willow Wren Canal Carrying Co and renamed *Cygnets*.

The period following the Bridgewater rally was the last brief flowering of commerce for

Waddington's fleet and it all came to an abrupt end with the cessation of the Runcorn gasworks traffic in 1962. By September that year the boats were all laid up and then sold off. *Galatea* went to a school in London, while *Gertrude* was sold to a school in Manchester. The other vessels were sold to various individuals to be used as pleasure craft, or for maintenance work.

Waddington spent a few more months on the Bridgewater Canal 'Dukering'. The Duke of Bridgewater's name was still applied to the large steel flats and motor barges operated by the Manchester Ship Canal Company's Bridgewater Department, carrying grain from vessels discharging in Manchester or Birkenhead docks to the Kellogg's cereal mill at Trafford Park. However, he eventually tired of loading and boating by day in order to spend the night moving the vessel about to facilitate discharge, and went to a job 'on the bank'.





## BOATING TO BRAUNSTON

Located at the junction of the Grand Union and Oxford canals, Braunston thrived on its canal trade for over 150 years.

CHRIS M. JONES looks back

One regular cargo taken to Braunston Wharf was coke to fuel steamers operated by Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd. The single horse-boat *Australia* is shown here next to the gated Oxford Canal stop-lock loaded with coke, waiting to move towards the wharf and unload. Coke was approximately half the weight of coal, which explains the high freeboard of the boat, and was drawn from gasworks at Leamington Spa or Rugby. Because it was an easy short-haul job it was sometimes given to more elderly boaters. This image was taken during the 1923 boatmen's strike, in which many FMC boats were tied up, including *Denmark* (nearest the camera with a fore-cabin).

Richard Thomas Collection

In the days of commercial carrying, Braunston was a place where boats might stop to pay their tolls, make an overnight stay or replenish supplies before continuing their journeys. In addition to this passing trade, it was also a destination for cargoes supplying local traders. The Grand Junction Canal Company, for example, had a steam pumping-engine for back-pumping water at Braunston Locks and maintaining water levels at its reservoirs, as well as steam-powered tunnel tugs, which required a regular coal supply.

Most local traders relying on canal transport had their cargoes delivered on, or near, the Oxford Canal Company's Braunston Wharf, as the majority of the warehouses were situated there. The dry dock and

basin were part of the old meandering course of the Oxford Canal, situated between the Grand Junction Canal and the Braunston-to-Daventry trunk road called London Road, now better known as the A45. The GJC's grain warehouse was only a few yards from the wharf against a narrow canal arm leading from the junction.

Traders using the cut had a range of occupations, including farmers, fuel and builders' merchants, brick- and tile-makers, dealers and factors of agricultural produce, publicans and boat-builders; some were a combination of these.

### Local traders

One well-known local carrier was Emanuel Smith Senior, who was an

owner-boatman and coal retailer at the wharf. By the late 1870s he had four boats, *Good Intent*, *Faithful*, *Harry* and *Defiance*. In 1881 his family lived in a cottage on London Road, and while he was out boating, his wife Eliza worked as a coal merchant and cared for their large family. Emanuel and Eliza had several sons including William, John Henry and Emanuel Junior, all of whom became independent boatman contractors.

During the 19th century OCC's Braunston warehouse was let out to tenants in one-room lots thanks to the thriving corn trade. In the late 1880s Emanuel Smith Senior rented the top floor of the warehouse and also the bottom floor to store his coal. When he died in 1900 the space was





Above: The Oxford Canal passed beneath London Road (the A45) before meandering its way across the fields and joining a later-built section of canal. This view shows the bridge parapet on the left with a single-storey canal company cottage straddling the redundant canal on the opposite side. Behind the cottage was a stable attached to the back of the dwelling. The cottages and warehouses on the right had cellars beneath them and formed an extension of another row of warehouses situated behind, alongside the canal. Although all the buildings in the foreground have been demolished, the houses along the main road still exist, one of which was the Champion Inn, once run by William Nurser in the mid-1870s just before he set up his own boat-building business at the wharf. **Waterway Archive**

let to his son, boatman William Smith, who lived in a house in Braunston High Street and ran his own boats to Dickinson's Croxley mills.

Another trader based at Braunston was coal merchant Samuel Mason. He later sold beer and became a farmer, and in the 1860s was based at the Nelson Inn. It seems Mason mostly used contractors to carry his coal. One such was Philip Mellor of Weedon, who traded as a boatman contractor and coal merchant at Weedon Wharf. Mason died in 1906 and his son Henry Collins Mason took over the Nelson Inn as well as the farm and coal business. He was still having coal deliveries by water at the end of World War I.

Alfred Knight was born in Braunston and was trading as a coal merchant and general carter by 1855. He spent all his working life supplying fuel to the local inhabitants, mostly at Braunston Wharf. By May 1907 he was bringing up regular quantities of coal by boat from Birch Coppice Colliery at Polesworth, and he also sold firewood. Knight had two or three boatloads of coal delivered to Braunston Wharf each month, while Samuel Mason only had one or two. Knight, like Mason, used contractors to carry his coal, as well as the firm Samuel Barlow of Glascote and its successor Samuel Barlow (Tamworth) Ltd. When Alfred Knight died in 1924 his business was carried on by his son and manager Albert Howard Knight.

Boat-builder William Stephenson, who operated at the Grand Junction

Dock at Braunston Bottom Lock and also Braunston Wharf, rented the Grand Junction warehouse for the storage of grain. He vacated the warehouse at the end of 1878 before moving to Oxford. His successor at the wharf was William Nurser who, as well as boat-building, also traded as a tarpaulier and builders' merchant, selling bricks, tiles, pipes, lime and cement, which were brought to the wharf by boat.



Above: One of the Oxford Canal Company warehouses at Braunston Wharf ran parallel with the towpath. This structure was split into three rooms, each 23ft by 18ft, at towpath level, with stables beneath accessed from a path leading down to the lower level behind the building. Any tenant loading or unloading over the towpath would have incurred wharfage charges payable to the company. This image was taken during the middle years of the 20th century when the Samuel Barlow Coal Co was the tenant at Braunston Wharf. The building was in a poor state of repair and was eventually demolished. One of Barlows' boats is in the foreground. **Waterway Archive**



## Coal for GJC

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most of the coal for Braunston pumping station and the Braunston tunnel tug was transported by William Woodward of Stoke Bruerne. After William's death his widow, Annie Woodward, took on the work. The pair used to run the Boat Inn above the top of Stoke Locks. GJC used coal for its tug rather than coke, though FMC used the latter for its steamers. Most of the coal for the tug came from Digby and Shipley collieries in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire respectively, although Wyken Colliery on the northern Oxford Canal was used on occasion. Until the early 1860s most of the coal had been drawn from Warwickshire pits, but high tolls on the Oxford Canal meant that GJC turned to supplies from Derbyshire. Coal for the pumping station came from Pooley Hall and Wyken, as well as from Shipley and Digby. Annie Woodward gave up carrying in 1913, with contractors carrying out the work until the summer of 1914, when FMC took it over using its own boats or boatmen contractors. In the late 1920s some of the coal was carried by Samuel Barlow (Tamworth) Ltd.

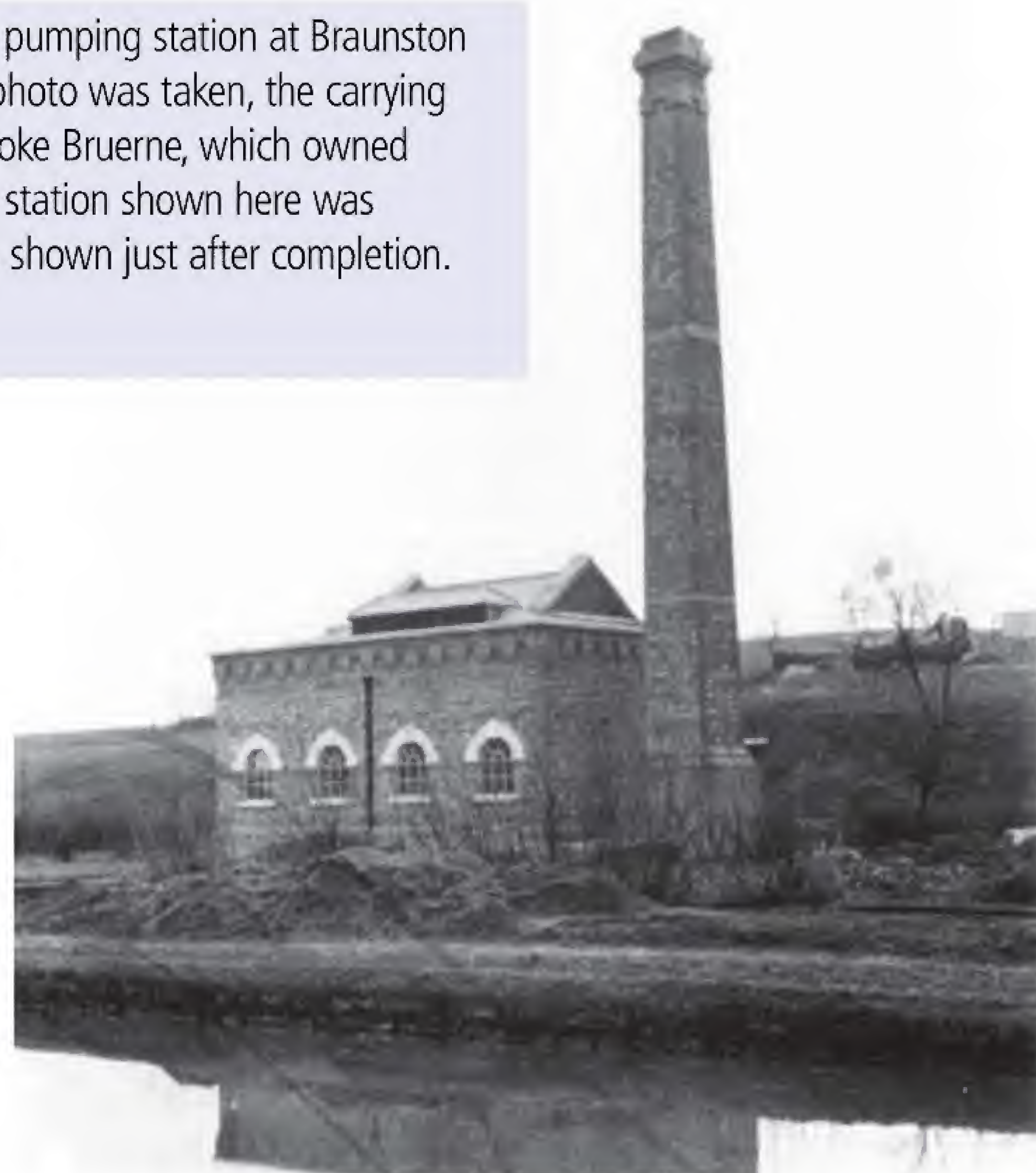
*Right: Coal for the Grand Junction Canal Company's pumping station at Braunston was transported by private carriers. At the time this photo was taken, the carrying work was being done by the Woodward family of Stoke Bruerne, which owned several horse-drawn boats. The newly built pumping station shown here was built in 1897 to replace an earlier installation, and is shown just after completion.*  
**Waterway Archive**

## Railway competition

Trade at Braunston was boosted by the building of the L&NWR Weedon-to-Leamington railway line, which began in 1892. The contractors were Walter Scott & Co. The new line crossed London Road via an iron bridge, and the station at Braunston opened on 1st August 1895.

One trader who benefitted was John Whittingham, superintendent of OCC at Hillmorton, who owned a sandpit there. He obtained a contract for supplying sand for the new railway at three boatloads per week in November 1892. His boat was named *Nancy* and Whittingham kept her until his retirement in 1896.

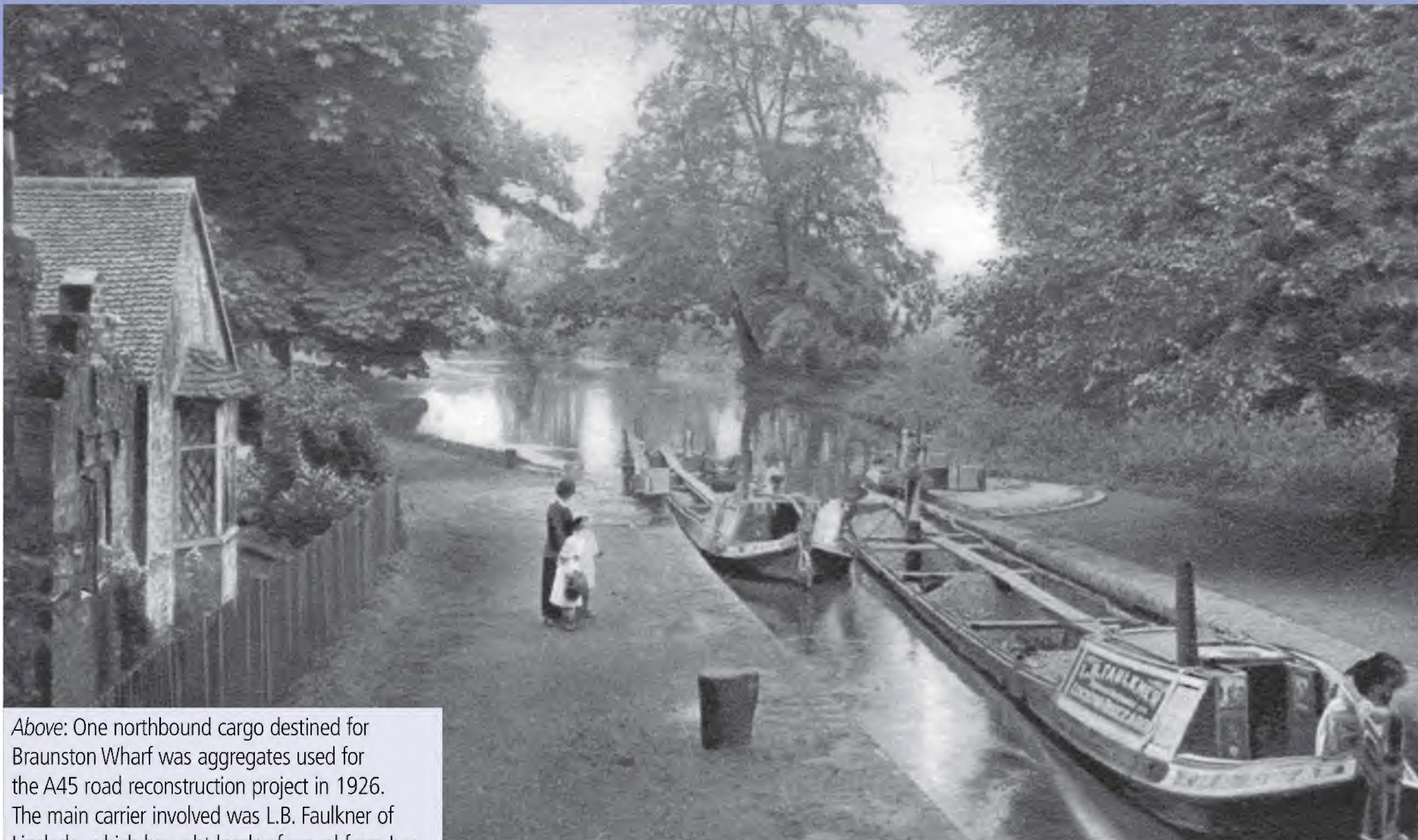
Trader Thomas Lapworth of Tusses Bridge applied for a beneficial toll rate to carry drainpipes and bricks to Braunston and elsewhere for the new railway. But even before the station was officially opened the railway carriage rate had an



*Below: Coal for fuelling the Grand Junction Canal Company's tunnel tugs formed a local cargo at Braunston. It was transported by various private carriers for the canal company over the course of time, and was mostly sourced from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. This image gives an atmospheric view of a GJC tug nearing Braunston Top Lock, with a northbound group of craft, with their horses and drivers patiently waiting to receive them. The tunnel portal can just be seen in the distance behind the last boat.*  
**Waterway Archive/Michael Ware Image Collection**







Above: One northbound cargo destined for Braunston Wharf was aggregates used for the A45 road reconstruction project in 1926. The main carrier involved was L.B. Faulkner of Linslade, which brought loads of gravel from Iwer at the junction of the Slough branch of the Grand Junction Canal. Although taken years earlier, this view of a pair of Faulkner horse-boats leaving Iron Bridge Lock at Cassiobury Park shows what the boats would have looked like carrying this heavy bulk cargo. The nearest boat is *The Swan*, built for Faulkner's in 1908.

**Christopher M. Jones Collection**

effect on the canal trade. It was said in November 1894 that transporting coal from Baddesley Colliery to Daventry Station by rail was considerably cheaper than moving it by water to Braunston Wharf. In July 1895, just before Braunston station opened, Lapworth was supplying coal to Braunston Wharf, but the impact of the railway meant that despite his negotiated reduction in tolls, the trade was still uneconomic. The railway company had sent its coal agents to offer traders low carriage rates in order to poach traffic from the canal. Lapworth had been carrying for at least two traders at Braunston: Alfred Knight and Philip Boswell, the former since 1890, but now they threatened to take their business to the new railway.

The altered trading conditions meant that Emanuel Smith Junior found he could no longer make a living from canal transport, so he gave up the local trade and moved to Brentford in about 1896. There he set up what eventually became a substantial canal and river carrying business that lasted until 1930.

L&NWR was not the only railway being built. In October 1894 the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway was working on the 'London Extension Contract No 4', but, thankfully for the canal, it headed south from Rugby and bypassed Braunston to the west, passing

Right: Several generations of the Boswell family used canal transport at Braunston. They were heavily involved in Braunston's brick-making industry and were also coal and hay merchants and farmers. This receipt is from Philip Boswell, who took over from his mother as a brick-maker. Philip's brother William was a publican at the Anchor at Braunston Top Lock and traded in hay and straw, which he stored in a warehouse at Braunston Wharf. He was said to supply most of the hunting stables in the district, and some of his hay was purchased from enterprising Oxford Canal boatmen who bought it from farmers along the route when returning to the Warwickshire colliery district. **Christopher M. Jones Collection**

BRUNSTON, NEAR RUGBY.

Dec 15<sup>th</sup> 1892.

M<sup>rs</sup> Elliott.

BOUGHT OF PHILIP BOSWELL,  
BRICK & TILE MANUFACTURER,  
COAL MERCHANT, &c.

1892			
Oct 17 <sup>th</sup>	1,000. Plain Tiles 3sf-	1-18-0.	
24 <sup>th</sup>	400. 6w. Bricks 3/6	" 10-0.	
27	400. 10-0	" 10-0	
			£ 2-18-0.

Settled Dec 14 1892  
P. Boswell

through the villages of Willoughby and Charwelton en route to London. The line was renamed the Great Central Railway in 1897. Sand for the railway construction was excavated at Hillmorton from pits leased by R.G. Stanley-Banks, who was the proprietor of a brick and tile works there. It was taken via Braunston to Willoughby Wharf, Flecknoe, then on to Napton. Bricks for the railway were also transported by boat, and in spring 1895 merchant J. Fairbrother & Co of Rugby handled this traffic. The firm used coal merchant and contractor John Busby of Hillmorton Wharf to handle some of the boating. Busby owned the boat *Sarah Ann*, and later in 1895 bought *Black Diamond*. Bricks were also supplied by Mason & Watson, the owners of Napton brickworks.

MS&LR passed just a few yards from the northern Oxford Canal at Barby, and Thomas Lapworth was contracted to carry coal, bricks and stone to be delivered between bridges 81 and 82, which were then carried over the towpath and loaded into

railway wagons. Fairbrother's traffic was also carried by Lapworth to Braunston. The railway contractor for this area was T. Oliver & Son, which employed 20 men full-time, unloading at Barby using planks and barrows, which caused some complaints from boaters as they had to pass their towing lines over the moored boats and negotiate the unloading planks. The stone came from Mancetter quarries and was used for concrete making for railway bridge foundations. Oliver's was contracted for delivery to Rugby, Clifton, Hillmorton, Barby, Willoughby and Braunston. John Griffiths of Bedworth was another carrier subcontracted to take bricks for the new line by railway contractors Topham, Jones & Railton of London.

As it turned out, Alfred Knight kept most of his trade on the water, and he never had any coal via the new Great Central Railway. But the line did have an impact on the roadstone traffic to the wharf, with most of it being delivered to Braunston Station. Grain traffic was also in decline. Westley,





Above: At one time there was a loop of the Grand Junction Canal stretching from the Oxford Canal towpath bridge on the left, then following the southern perimeter of the GJC's two reservoirs, before rejoining the main line of canal between Butchers Bridge No 1 and Braunston Bottom Lock. On the left is the boatyard of William Nurser & Sons at Braunston Wharf, with several partially or completely sunken boats visible. Note Braunston windmill in the distance. **R&CHS Collection/Northamptonshire Archives**



Above: One familiar structure to boaters in Braunston is the Grand Junction Canal Company's gauging station alongside Braunston Bottom Lock. Boats requiring weighing for the company's dry-inch boat gauging register were ordered to be weighed when running light past the station. Many of these were involved with the coal-carrying trade and passed the station when returning empty to the Midlands colliery district. A lot of boats involved in general cargo-carrying passed fully laden and were gauged elsewhere on the system, such as at Brentford, in between unloading and loading. Taken in May 1954 this image shows a pair of British Waterways craft northbound. The motor is a large Northwich, while the butty is a small Woolwich craft. **R&CHS Collection**

Brothers & Clark, Northampton millers, had warehouse space at Braunston, but decided to give it up in February 1901. Thomas Lapworth retired in the early 20th century and died on 23rd May 1906.

The threat of railway competition meant that it sometimes proved a struggle to keep trade on the cut. During World War I coal deliveries were difficult to get. By then Henry Collins Mason sold only a few boatloads per year, and Alfred Knight one boatload per month, with the rest of his stock coming by rail. In order to keep coal supplies up, the Daventry Cooperative Industrial Society brought in coal by road and then transported it by boat to the wharf.

After the war the local trade was very small, and although the pubs and blacksmith profited from the scant canal traffic, OCC gained very little due to low toll revenues and rents; a difficult situation when, without the canal, they all would be out of business. This criticism was mainly levelled at the landlord of the Castle Inn, Henry Stuchbury, and the smithy next door, run by George White, on the southern towpath side of the cut against the London Road Bridge 91.

## FMC at Braunston

An important development at Braunston Wharf was the creation





Above: Local and through traffic at Braunston had to be gauged and permitted at the Oxford Canal Company's toll office, shown here beside the gated narrows. Traffic terminating at the wharf had the original toll permit collected at this stop and a copy permit issued in its place as a record of the cargo's gauged weight for the merchant receiving his goods, so he could pay the boatman the balance of his haulage money. This office was closed on 17th December 1916 due to the retirement of the toll clerk and difficulty finding a replacement during World War I. The clerk continued to live at the toll house, acting as an agent and caretaker for OCC, occasionally gauging short-haul local traffic and issuing toll permits. The FMC boat *Northolt*, built in 1898, eventually joined the Samuel Barlow Coal Co fleet and was later renamed *Sunny Valley*. She famously appeared in the Ealing Studios film *Painted Boats*, shot in 1944.

**R&CHS Collection**

Below: Taken during the first decades of the 20th century, this view beneath the iron towpath bridge clearly shows the Grand Junction Canal Company's three-storey grain warehouse, accessed via the increasingly weedy arm that joined the Oxford Canal by the moored boat. In the distance, perched on the railway embankment behind the warehouse, is Braunston Station and platforms, where the goods yard did much to damage canal traffic to Braunston Wharf. **Colin Such Collection**





# Historical profile

of a transhipment depot for carriers Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd. Early in January 1901 OCC gave FMC permission to take over two warehouses and stables at the wharf. After plans were drawn up between FMC and OCC the canal company started work at Braunston towards the end of March 1901, and FMC officially started its transhipment business at Braunston Wharf on 1st May 1901.

Various cargoes were transported to Braunston to expand the firm's own traffic. Provender was sent from its Fazeley Street premises at Birmingham and elsewhere for the boat horses, while coke was brought from gasworks at Leamington, Rugby and Northampton to fuel steamers.

One unforeseen problem was a housing shortage. Although some boaters lived aboard their vessels,

quite a number also lived in houses, and with FMC established at the wharf, more and more boaters took up residence in the village. As the available dwellings filled with tenants, rents rose due to the limited housing. By November 1901 it was almost impossible to find a vacancy. There was no solution other than to build new houses, but even 13 years later Braunston parishioners were





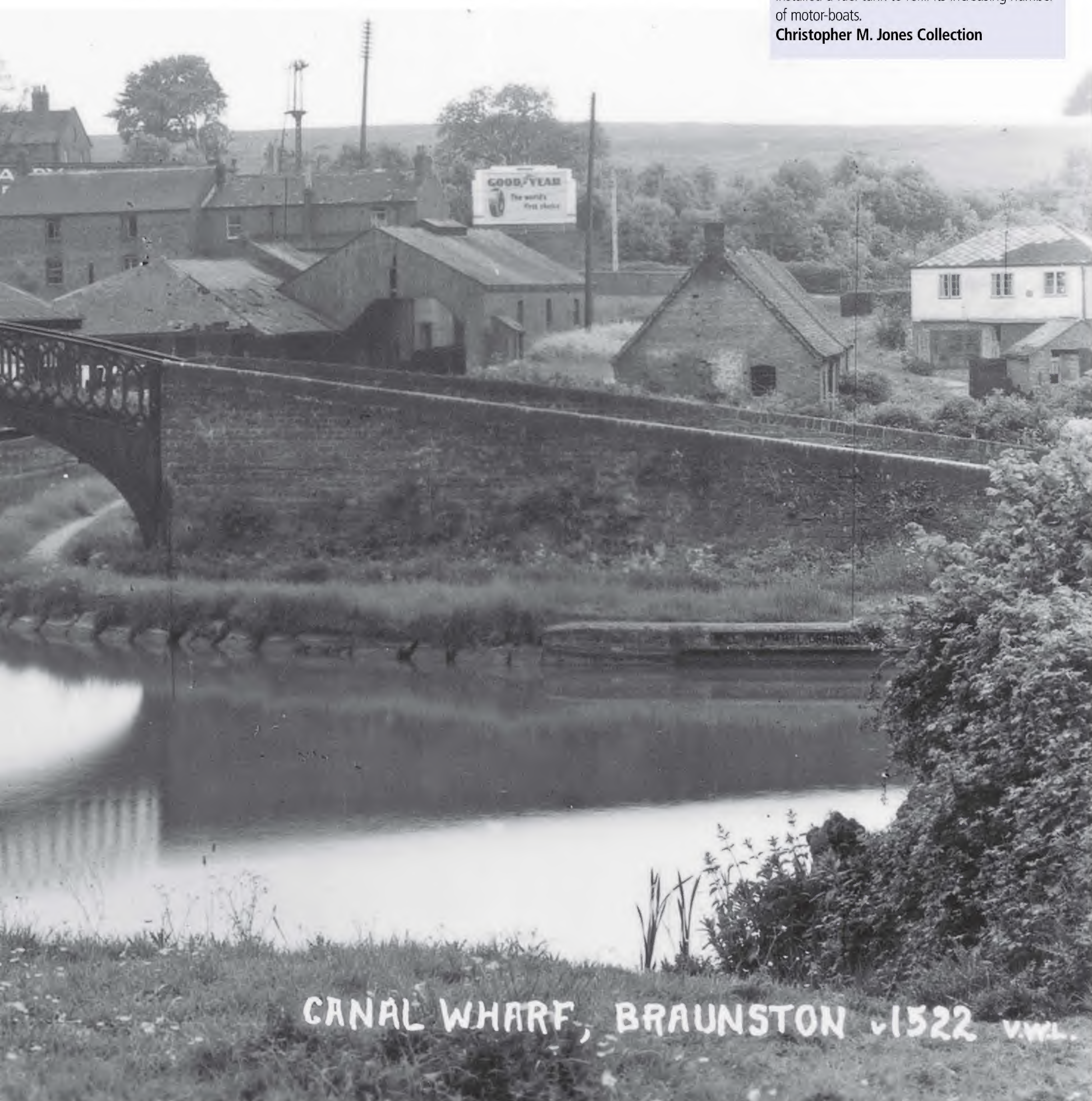
still voting against building any new homes.

When a steamer arrived at the wharf from the Grand Junction Canal, it unloaded, reloaded and picked up a different loaded butty for the return trip to Brentford. The steamer's cargo was reloaded into a single horse-boat to complete its journey to Birmingham via the narrow-locked Warwick & Napton and Warwick & Birmingham

canals. FMC had four of these craft working a shuttle service and they were referred to as 'Braunston Feeders'. Steamers on the Brentford-to-Braunston trip might be paired with a butty or worked singly, and average three round trips a fortnight. At other times steamers dropped off their butties at Braunston and continued on to Birmingham, with the butty following behind towed by a horse.

This general view of Braunston Wharf was taken in the later years of commercial trade when the site was becoming increasingly run down. In the background is the Weedon-to-Leamington branch line crossing the A45 on a steel bridge, and in front is a shabby collection of old Oxford Canal Company warehouses and cottages. Partly obscured by the iron towpath bridge is the most recently built structure, with its awning sheltering two Samuel Barlow Coal Co butties, one of which is *Rosie Agnes*, acquired from owner-boatman John H. Rice. Just a few feet away, Barlows had installed a fuel tank to refill its increasing number of motor-boats.

**Christopher M. Jones Collection**







Long after the Grand Junction loop at Braunston ceased to be used by grain boats accessing the company's warehouse, it became an overgrown reedy dumping ground for disused Samuel Barlow boats, some of which eventually sank into the mud. The nearest boat is *Jane*, built by Lees & Atkins of Polesworth for Henry Grantham as *Sarah Jane*. The vessel was acquired by Barlows in 1940 and renamed *Jane*.

**Waterway Archive**





Fellows, Morton & Clayton employed a number of owner-boatmen to supplement its carrying fleet on a regular or part-time basis. These mainly served FMC's Uxbridge Coal Department up to London, returning with all manner of general cargoes from Brentford. Some of these were unloaded at Braunston Wharf before the vessels returned to the colliery district or some other loading point. One of FMC's regular 'owners' was Thomas Henry Green of Birmingham, shown here during the 1923 boatmen's strike with his boat *Rose Agnes*. It was built in 1913 for another of FMC's contractors, John Walker, and acquired by Green in 1916.

**Richard Thomas Collection**

FMC sent the occasional wide-boat to the wharf for transhipment, and by late 1910, it was doing so regularly. These wide-boats were hired craft, as FMC only had one of its own at that time, newly built and appropriately named *Braunston*. Two new vessels were added in 1911, and two more in 1912. In October 1911 there were three wide-boats running from the Thames to the wharf, including the steam-powered *Swan*, fuelled by waste oil and steered by Charles Newton. Although the Grand Junction was built as a broad canal, there were problems with these craft as other boats had difficulty passing them. FMC complained that a wide-boat and a narrowboat could not get in the transhipment shed together, which caused difficulties in bad weather, especially with cargoes being easily damaged by damp. All FMC's wide-boats were commandeered by the government in 1915 and sent to serve their country on the French canals instead.

Most of the transhipment work at Braunston was for the London-to-Birmingham trade, but in 1908 FMC tried to revive its London to Coventry trade with steamers and butties. A year later it was proposed that a new shed should be erected at Braunston to facilitate this, so the steamers could tranship their cargoes in the same way as in the Birmingham trade. Coventry traders were lukewarm about the plans, but FMC persevered and hoped that traffic would increase. The main up-traffic from Coventry to London was iron castings, while down-traffic was sugar and glucose.

The management of the transhipment depot was under the control of FMC's agent and foreman Alfred Ironmonger of Moseley, Birmingham, who came over to Braunston three times a week to handle matters and keep everything working. He was credited as having the tact and experience to deal with a number of difficulties with the boatmen, despite one of his superiors at Fazeley Street in Birmingham being opposed to his appointment. In January 1913 he became seriously ill and he died on 3rd February. FMC had moved swiftly on learning of his illness, and had stopped operations at the wharf even before his death. By the last week in January, FMC had ordered that no more transhipment from steamers was to take place. Two of the wharf men were put under notice, and the clerk was transferred to the Birmingham office.

Alfred Ironmonger was eventually replaced by a new manager who also visited the wharf three days per week. A certain amount of transhipment still took place for various reasons during World War I and afterwards, which ended in January 1924 when FMC tied some of its redundant steamers up at the wharf. Three of the four men employed at the wharf were given notice of dismissal. Occasional transhipping occurred over the next few months – for example, when goods destined for Coventry were brought in on the steamer *Victory* and then sent by road in one of FMC's own lorries – but in June 1924 the unloading

machinery was finally dismantled.

With both rail and road transport affecting FMC's traffics, the firm resorted to coal-carrying to keep their boats employed. FMC retained the buildings at Braunston for a time but they were little used.

## Road reconstruction

London Road underwent major reconstruction during 1926, and the contract for the first section from Braunston to Daventry went to public works contractor C.H. Linton. The firm required large quantities of gravel for concreting work, estimated at over 6,000 tons. This represented over 200 boatloads and the carrier contracted to do the work was L.B. Faulkner of Linslade, which specialised in supplying road construction and repair materials. Work started in August and the first delivery to Braunston Wharf was on the 5th: a sample load so the contractors could test the quality. Gravel came from Iver at the junction of the Slough Arm on the southern Grand Junction Canal, and the initial tonnage estimate was soon increased to 8,000 tons (over 142 pairs), and in the end was probably much more. All this was welcome news to Faulkner as his usual coal traffic was disrupted by the coal strike from 1st March to 30th November 1926.

Another supplier of gravel was Charles Reginald Whiting of Cosgrove Lodge. He was a farmer with large gravel deposits on his property, which he transported to his loading wharf above Cosgrove Lock using a specially constructed tramway built in 1926. Sand came from John G. Cowell of Dodford Farm, Weedon, who worked a sandpit on his land from September 1925. All this traffic came in regular deliveries over the following year, eventually winding down in September 1927.

Once FMC departed, Braunston Wharf became predominantly a boat-building centre, with Nurser Brothers, and their successors, the Samuel Barlow Coal Co Ltd, dominating the trade there. There were still occasional deliveries, such as hay for a local farmer, but little coal traffic.

## Acknowledgement

With thanks to canal boat families historian Lorna York.



CHRIS M. JONES studies early 20th-century images showing traffic on the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation and River Trent at Keadby

## KEELS AT KEADBY



Since the completion of the Stainforth & Keadby Canal in the early years of the 19th century, its junction with the tidal River Trent at Keadby has been one of those special places to see different types of inland waterways and seagoing vessels at close quarters. During that century, the canal passed into the hands of several owners, then in 1895 became part of the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation.

The previous owners of the canal were the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway, which became the Great Central in 1897, and this ensured there was a significant railway presence from the West Riding collieries at Keadby. There were two coaling staithes for loading keels on the canal in addition to one terminating at right-angles to the Trent for loading coastal and other seagoing craft that were too big for Keadby Lock or too deep for the canal. Some of these craft were Thames barges, which loaded for east coast and estuary ports, or into London. Other cargoes were loaded, such as foundry sand, direct from railway wagons.

**Above:** Much of the boating activity at Keadby was through-traffic. Boats heading inland, mainly from the Port of Hull, were taken via the rivers Humber and Trent by tug. Here the United Towing Co tug *Krooman* is performing a 180-degree turn, with a number of keels in tow upstream of Keadby Lock. This was done to bring all the craft round to stem the flood tide, which made handling the boats into Keadby Lock much easier. Two keels have their masts raised in readiness to hoist their sails as they intend to navigate the canal under wind power. Keels without masts would hire a horse-marine, which was a contract horse-driver who enabled keel captains to complete their trip under animal power. *Krooman* was built at South Shields in 1905 for Hull tug-owner Thomas Gray & Co Ltd, which was amalgamated with others to form the United Towing Co Ltd in 1921. In the distance is King George V lift-bridge, opened in 1916, and Keadby windmill.

**Chris M. Jones Collection**

**Opposite top:** After being dropped off at the riverside jetty, keels then penned through Keadby Lock, as shown here in the 1930s. This lock has four pairs of gates so can be used whatever the state of the tide. Keelman negotiated the lock using boathooks and stowers, the latter being shafts up to 24ft long, before tying up on the south bank seen just ahead on the left. Vessels waiting to head out onto the river stopped on the north bank (as seen on the right). Local road traffic passed this spot via a wooden swing-bridge that has been swung over to allow the keel to pass. Clearly visible on the left-hand side is the Friendship Inn, with the other buildings being occupied by a Chandler, a sail loft and a mast and block maker's premises. The keel passing through is *Process*, owned by owner-keelman John Thomas Parish of Stainforth, a canalside village on the S&SYN. She was registered at Thorne in February 1904, and later converted to a motor barge late in 1939.





**Above:** After penning through Keadby Lock, keels entered the canal and, like every other artificial navigation, had to pay a toll. About this time, the toll clerk at Keadby was a Mr Herbert Fox. The captain had to hand over his declaration to the clerk, which recorded the type of cargo, the place it was loaded and its intended destination, plus details of the weight, the vessel's captain etc, all written under the authority of the consignee. The clerk would check the indexed weight of the keel from metal tonnage plates on the bow and stern posts. These were like a vertical ruler fixed on the hull and showed the loaded draught where the waterline

intersected the ruled marks. The weight was checked against the declared weight and, if near enough, a toll was charged to the consignee, usually through a pre-arranged toll credit account. Here several keels create a busy scene with four preparing to head inland, the nearest being *Edda* owned about this time by carriers Hutton & Co of Hull. Although the name of the man at the stern is unknown, it is most likely captain Henry Mapes of Hull who was *Edda's* captain in March 1915. The keel directly in front is *Onesimus*, worked by owner-keelman Arthur Whittles of Hull and registered in August 1914. **Chris M. Jones Collection**









This view from the swing-bridge at the western end of Keadby Lock shows the keel *Annie*, which worked out of Thorne, a canalside village situated further along the canal. She was owned and steered by keelman George William White and registered in September 1898. The clarity of this image shows some of *Annie*'s deck fittings and details of the standing and running rigging. Not often seen close up is the decorative paintwork of keels, and, on the boat's mainsheet horse, the name, home port and registration details are written in a Tuscan-style, sometimes seen on narrowboats. Ahead is a clinker-built keel with a family group chatting away at the stern. Her mainsail has already been unfurled and is ready for use, if only a breath of wind would blow. A steam tug was available at one time, working between Keadby and Doncaster. On the north bank on the right, adjustable loading shutes are positioned on the hump so keels can be loaded direct from railway wagons. This raised portion of track at the staithe is clearly shown and is there to allow sufficient height for loading. On the right several locomotives with their tenders wait in steam by a water crane.

**Chris M. Jones Collection**



# A broader outlook



**Above:** Before towing towards Hull can begin, loaded keels moored on the canal had to be locked down onto the tidal Trent, before being marshalled into the correct position for towing. This was done by the tug-broker who learned which keel was intended for which dock, and arranged each craft accordingly so they could be dropped off in sequence at their destinations. If any Thames barges needed a tow, they had to be taken into account too. All these craft were arranged in two rows in a V-formation when under way, with a maximum of eight craft in the entire tow. Keels going to Hull had to be checked by the tug-broker that they were at least two-handed, but if a keel was only single-handed the captain had to hire an extra crew member known as a 'purchase-man'. This casual hand would be paid off on arrival at Hull and would have to find passage back to Keadby on another vessel. Here at the jetty, keels are waiting for the tug that can be seen on the left.

**Chris M. Jones Collection**

**Below:** In this view, a steam tug on the extreme left leaves for Hull with two lines of keels in tow, with another tug coming in behind, having just arrived from Hull with another tow. In the foreground the laden keel *Sequel* is lying moored with its elderly steerer patiently waiting at its heavy wooden tiller for their turn for a tow. He could well be William Henry Laurence who was *Sequel*'s captain when she was registered in July 1902, and is of the right age. *Sequel*, along with other keels, towed a cog-boat behind, which acted as a tender so the crew could get ashore and back when needed, or for use transporting anchors or warping line when

in the docks, or as a lifeboat. *Sequel*'s cog-boat has a rope and anchor aboard and the ubiquitous single oar for propelling from the stern by sculling. Most keels carrying coal would be on their way to St Andrew's (Fish) Dock, Hull, for bunkering the port's large steam trawler fleet. On a favourable afternoon tide, the craft might get to Burton Stather on the Trent and if conditions warranted, continue on to Walker Dyke on the southern bank of the Humber. After waiting a few hours the tow continued on the next high water towards the northern bank and on to Hull.

**Chris M. Jones Collection**





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Two evocative colour images from JACK PARKINSON'S collection show canal-carrying on the Grand Union in the mid-'60s

# BLUE LINE AT MARSWORTH

One of the last canal transport companies to operate on the Grand Union was Blue Line Canal Carriers Ltd. Two of its boats, *Ian* and *Lucy*, are seen in these photographs, taken at Marsworth Locks in May 1965 while being operated by Rose and Bill Whitock, with Laura Carter.

The first image showing *Ian* was taken above Lock 39. Despite passing into the Blue Line fleet in 1962, the boat still bears the livery of her previous owner, Samuel Barlow Coal Company Ltd, and would have been due for docking soon.

*Ian* was a product of post-war Britain, being built at Braunston Wharf late in 1948 for Barlows and paid for by the Ministry of Transport. She had a Ruston Hornsby engine valued at £200 in 1955 and was steered throughout the 1960s by Laura Carter. She carried coal, usually for Kearley & Tonge Ltd, jam manufacturers at Rubastic Dock, Southall, known to boaters as the 'Jam 'Ole'.

The second image shows *Ian* and *Lucy* between Marsworth locks 41 and 42, and gives us a good view of

the hard work needed to get both boats around the turns. We can see how Rose Whitock on *Lucy* used the running block method of towing, with the line held fast on a large T-stud bolted through the cabin roof next to the slide.

*Lucy* was built in the summer of 1952 at Braunston Wharf for canal-carrier John Knill, and was first steered by his boatman, Alf Best. Just after Christmas 1954 John Knill's business was bought by Barlows and *Lucy* passed into its fleet for £850.

*Ian* only lasted a few years more after this image was taken and was replaced by the former British Waterways motor *Renfrew* in December 1968. Originally constructed by W. J. Yarwood & Sons for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company in 1936, she then passed to the Docks & Inland Waterways Executive after nationalisation in 1947. *Renfrew* and *Lucy*'s last trip loaded with coal for the Jam 'Ole passed Braunston in the late morning of Tuesday 29th September 1970.

Both *Ian* and *Lucy* survived the following years to the present day with the latter currently undergoing major restoration at Braunston.







Jack Parkinson Collection/Online Transport Archive



Jack Parkinson Collection/Online Transport Archive



## BRITAIN AT WORK

CHRIS M. JONES explores the details of waterway photographs published in an early 20th-century book



Canal and river transport working in the salt manufacturing industry in Worcestershire and Cheshire formed a significant amount of traffic. This photo shows a salt works in Winsford, which was the centre of manufacturing in Cheshire, with loose salt being tipped into a steam packet. The close-up image reveals interesting details of her rigging and deck fittings, as well as the labour-intensive method of loading either loose or bagged salt. From here the vessels proceeded along the navigable River Weaver, Manchester Ship Canal and River Mersey to their destinations at Liverpool or Birkenhead. The salt was mainly for export and, during this period, was largely under the control of the Salt Union Limited (see NB Spring 2017). Earlier, these Weaver craft were powered by sail, then later by steam. Sometimes they returned from Liverpool with goods loaded in the docks, which were transhipped into a warehouse at Anderton for onward delivery by narrowboat, which then returned to Winsford for another load of salt.

In 1902, publishing house Cassell & Company produced a book called *Britain At Work, A Pictorial Description Of Our National Industries*. Several photographs showing inland waterways craft appear in its pages, with a typically Victorian description of boaters and their work in a chapter entitled 'Barge Life'.

Looking beyond the condescending prose, there are some nuggets of information about trade and traffics, accounts of life on the water from the boaters themselves, and a description of a cabin obviously based on first-hand observation.

In the first part, the writer describes a barge involved in the Middlesex brick trade, which could either be a wide- or narrow-beam craft. Reference was made to the familiar cabin layout and its bottle stove, "shaped something like an egg", which was a common feature of 19th-century boats. Of particular interest is a description of the cabin decoration. "Your first impression would probably be of bright blue and red colours. A very gaudily depicted Windsor Castle might strike your eye from the wooden panelling, then a soldier in startling uniform, anon a mermaid, and then, perchance, a





peacock in more brilliant dress than ever Dame Nature designed in her most lavish moods. (The) Bargee and his family evidently like bright colours.”

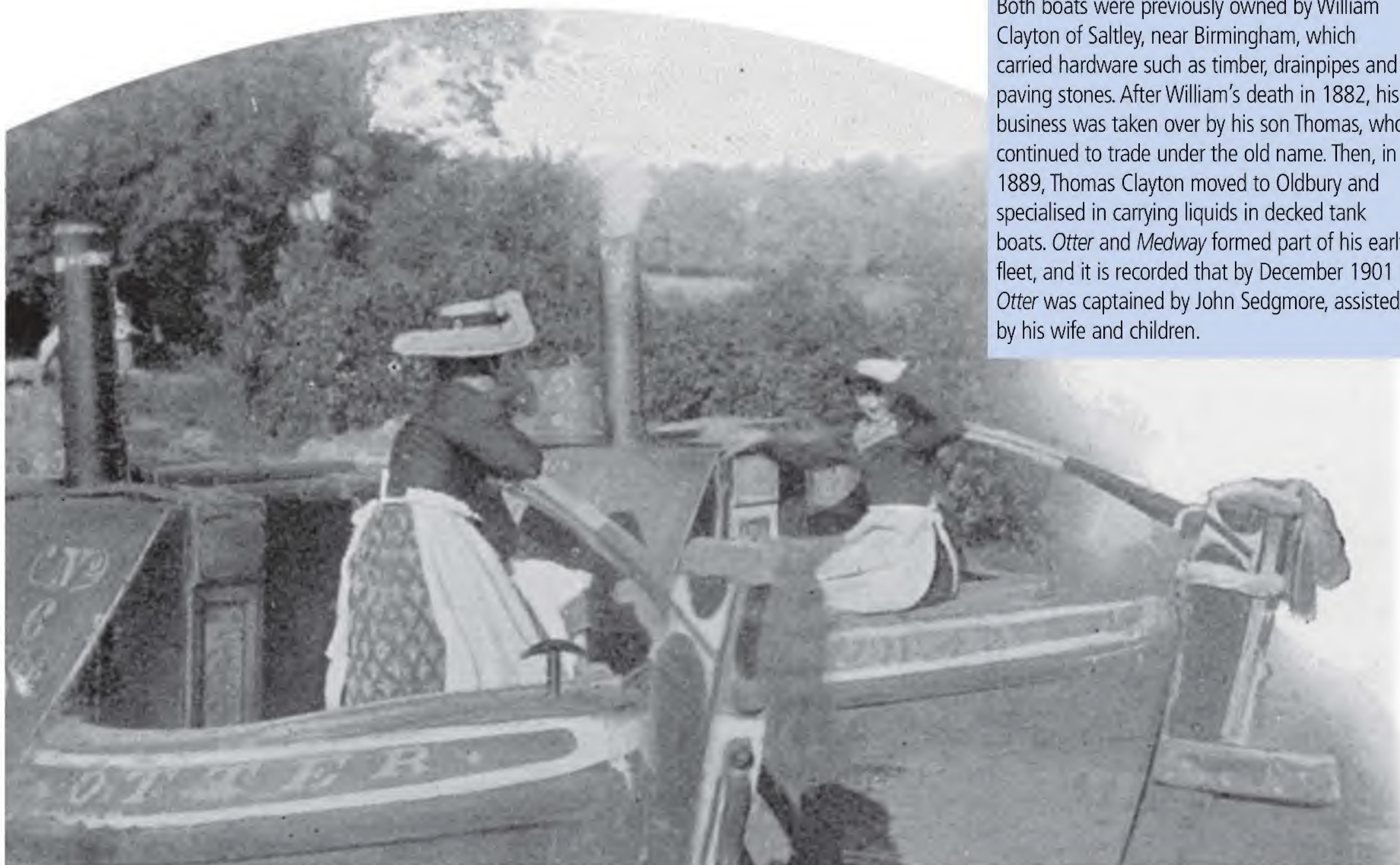
The chapter referred to the boating people as having a healthier way of life than those cooped up in town and city lodging houses. Although boaters passed through dreary industrial and mining districts, they also spent days travelling through the countryside breathing fresh air. It was the view of the writer that, on balance, “the liking of (the) bargee for his calling is genuine enough”.

The growth of carrying fleets is acknowledged, as is the fact that some companies allowed boaters and their families to live aboard under the regulations set by the Canal Boats Acts, while others forced men and their families to live on the bank. The chief inspector of canal boats had noted in 1891 that, following a dockers’ strike, three of the largest barge-owners on the Thames no longer allowed their men or families to sleep on board and several smaller companies and private owners had followed suit. Many of those remaining on board occupied narrowboats, which were under the scrutiny of a sanitary inspector who adhered to the regulations of the Canal

Boats Act. There was also a ‘School Board Man’ who compelled parents to send their children to school.

References to the general trade on the canals included the impact of railways. Trade by Thames sailing barges was also mentioned – of particular interest are those that ventured onto the Regent’s Canal via Limehouse Dock, then proceeded under horse power to their destination. These craft mixed with ‘towing barges’, which must surely be wide-boats, transporting bricks from the Middlesex brickfields into the capital, before returning with refuse from dust carts, street sweepings and stable manure for the farms of the Home Counties. Other cargoes had recently disappeared, such as salt from Worcestershire to Paddington Basin, which had been transferred to rail. This is independently verified by the transfer of the salt wharf occupancy at 8 South Side to builders’ merchants H. Sabey & Company by 1900.

The condescending title of this image, ‘Five Minutes’ Gossip’, ignores the fact that there were only snatched moments when boaters could catch up on the day-to-day affairs of life on the canal. The two boats, *Otter* and *Medway*, were owned by bulk liquids carrier Thomas Clayton of Oldbury. *Otter* was the oldest, dating back to May 1870, while *Medway* was from much later. Both boats were previously owned by William Clayton of Saltley, near Birmingham, which carried hardware such as timber, drainpipes and paving stones. After William’s death in 1882, his business was taken over by his son Thomas, who continued to trade under the old name. Then, in 1889, Thomas Clayton moved to Oldbury and specialised in carrying liquids in decked tank boats. *Otter* and *Medway* formed part of his early fleet, and it is recorded that by December 1901 *Otter* was captained by John Sedgmore, assisted by his wife and children.





# *Working the waterways*





*Opposite page (top):* The manufacture of firebricks was an important industry in the Black Country, particularly around the Stourbridge and Brierley Hill districts, where various clays were mined. Works in the area had used canal transport for many decades for both local and long-distance deliveries. Just as with the loading of coal, the work was carried out by both men and women, as shown in this image entitled 'Women Brickmakers Loading Barges'. One of the largest works at this time was Edward Jukes & John Pearson Ltd, which had three fire clay and brick manufacturers operating in Stourbridge, named: Delph, Tintam Abbey and Crown works. The clay was used for making crucibles in the glass industry, firebricks for blast furnaces and foundries, and retorts for gas works. Canal carriers such as Harris Brothers or Price & Son, both from Brierley Hill, transported firebricks all over the Midlands and up to London for works along the River Thames.

*Opposite page (bottom):* The tidal River Thames, known as the Pool of London, stretches between Limehouse and London Bridge, and had been the terminus for tall masted ships to discharge or load cargoes. Ships moored at buoys would transfer cargoes via lighters, which formed large rafts along the 'roads' (as they were called), between buoys and the quays. Narrowboats also ventured along the Pool using sweeps or large oars (or masts and sails in earlier times), and later by steam tug. Cargoes from the Midlands, such as finished iron products, bricks and firebricks, were taken to riverside whaves or into the various docks. Once unloaded, they would be reloaded with non-ferrous metals, lead, grain or timber. Price & Son and Harris Brothers of Brierley Hill, Fellows, Morton & Clayton of Birmingham and William & Samuel Foster of Tipton were typical carriers involved in this trade.

*Below:* This image titled 'A Familiar Canal Scene' shows a single lightly loaded Fellows, Morton & Clayton horse-boat heading away from Brentford, passing a wide-boat carrying a heavy load towards the Thames. The location is looking south between Osterley Lock No 98 and the Hounslow & Metropolitan Railway Bridge in the distance. The towpath bridge shown is over the River Brent as it enters the canal. FMC had a base at Brentford to deal with the large amount of import traffic from the London Docks destined for the Home Counties or Midlands. Sometimes their boats loaded directly from ships in the docks or warehouses, then, increasingly in later years, from lighters brought up to Brentford behind a steam tug. Wide-boats owned by various brick manufacturers on the lower Grand Junction and Slough Arm were a common sight at Brentford and would take their cargoes to places along the tidal Thames, sometimes back-loading with timber and grain (if fitted up with cloths) for firms in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

Despite the growth of steam power on the canals from the middle years of the 19th century, horse power still reigned supreme on the Grand Junction and Regent's canals for narrow- and wide-boats, and sailing and dumb barges too. Steam tugs were used on the Paddington Branch, however, to tow several rubbish or manure boats out to the redundant brickfields or farms, and, of course, steam tugs worked on the River Thames. Boat horses were housed in "shanties or stables" dotted along the towpath, usually connected with public houses. The numerous locks on the Regent's Canal ensured horse power continued after World War II.

Although rail transport clearly had advantages in the general and perishable goods traffic, the article suggests that bulk cargoes of timber, grain, brick, sand and other heavy merchandise could still be carried cheaply (albeit slowly) on the canals and rivers of Britain's capital.



### Acknowledgement

Thank you to Sheila Cook of the Shardlow Heritage Centre.



# CHARLES HADFIELD AND THE WORLD CANALS COLLECTION

JOSEPH BOUGHEY examines the public archives of  
well-known canal historian Charles Hadfield

Only a very small number of people in Britain could be deemed to be inland waterways historians, and still fewer have deposited their own papers in public archives. When archives comprise mostly materials that, as in Charles Hadfield's case, have led to publication, some may doubt how these could be useful. If all the valuable material went into books and articles, then surely the remainder can be discarded, right?

Wrong. My objections to this notion may be made on several counts. Notes and informal sources show how definitive accounts like those of Charles Hadfield were put together. If there were rare errors in transcription or interpretation, the archived records can show how these originated. New materials may have come to light since publication, so that older sources can be reinterpreted and their reliability assessed. Events subsequent to the date of publication can show whether the published conclusions, using trends and summaries that are now historic,

can be modified. Finally, what was published may have only attempted to summarise large quantities of data, and to consider some of this may add a great deal to the published accounts.

Charles Hadfield's books may well remain an early port of call in any enquiry about areas that his writings covered, but his notes and discoveries may help to amplify his published writings, and to inspire further work.

## Introducing Hadfield

Since early in 2018, almost all the various Hadfield collections have been housed in the Waterways Archive at Ellesmere Port. These collections vary in scope and method, and this article will briefly introduce Charles Hadfield's work and then discuss some insights from the World Canals Collection. It is hoped to cover other collections in later articles.

Charles Hadfield died in 1996 and almost all of his books are now out of print. For readers not familiar with his life and work, a little background may

be helpful; my *Canal Man and More*, long out of print, should supply many more details.

Born in 1909 in Transvaal, South Africa, he only encountered waterways after he arrived in Devon in 1923. He had an academic background in economics and was later employed as a senior civil servant. From 1939 he researched British canal history, and between 1981 and '86, the canals of the rest of the world (after many encounters and much accumulation of materials). A founder of the publishing firm of David & Charles, he published the definitive *The Canals of the British Isles* series, among many works, and wrote most of the volumes. He was also one of the founding members of the Inland Waterways Association and the Railway & Canal Historical Society, as well as a member of the first British Waterways Board in 1963. These involvements generated some materials that have found their way into collections, which will be considered in a later article.

## Collections

Primary sources in these collections are rare, although the British Canals Collection includes extensive notes on primary sources. While there are some original materials, such as British Waterways papers, most of his files comprise secondary sources, such as excerpts from books, articles, and correspondence with others who were carrying out research, or helped with research queries.

The latter is particularly the case with the World Canals Collection. This was gathered together and deposited at Ellesmere Port in 1985, not long before the publication of *World Canals*; it was the only collection placed there by Charles' explicit wish, as the museum had not long been founded. Problems with language, and the impossibility of visiting archives abroad for any length of time, meant that the collections almost entirely comprise secondary sources. They include books, most of which were written in English, and articles in







Above: Charles Hadfield (centre) at the bottom gate of Wappenshall Lock on the Shrewsbury Canal in 1964. J.G. Parkinson Collection

Left: Australia's Murray River, photographed in 1905, formed part of Charles Hadfield's research on worldwide waterways.

formal journals. The original materials comprise individual files, classified by country. Charles' approach was always to collect any materials about a waterway or country, group these into files, and build these up until they could be brought together to back a coherent account.

It must be stressed that Charles Hadfield was a pioneer in the field of world canals and he attempted to produce a single account of the historic development of waterways throughout the world. The book itself, and his files, suggest ways forward for further research.

### Waterways of British India

A large number of files concern waterways in North America, while France, Germany and the Netherlands are well covered. Much smaller sets of files examine the waterways of British India (now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh). Before the Empire, waterways there were used and developed for irrigation, a process accelerated by British domination. Hadfield's files include excerpts from a 1899 book *In India*, by the journalist G.W. Steevens, which focused on irrigation, but commented on the Western Jumma Canal, "as broad as the Thames below Folly Bridge" which was "a main highway of the timber trade".

Charles used three articles from *Waterways News* from 1977, that

detailed Indian waterways history. One of these highlighted U. Shankar Rao of Poona, who had established an Indian Centre for Maritime Economics; and advocated major improvements to the country's waterways, citing, oddly, BWB freight improvements, then much more hopeful than the present day. After he was contacted in January 1980, Mr Shankar Rao advised that he had many historic materials. Where these are now is uncertain – the Indian Centre for Maritime Economics seems to have disappeared.

Hadfield had founded the Commercial Carrying Group (later Inland Shipping Group) after being re-admitted into IWA, and this was contacted in 1973 by the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation Ltd of Calcutta, a state-backed carrier formed in 1967. The files include some annual reports of the Calcutta corporation, along with a long, detailed letter from the managing director, dated 1st June 1984, upon which Charles drew extensively. This included details of main traffics that did not appear in the annual reports. It foresaw the designation and development of various national waterways, which has come about, but the corporation itself is moribund. There is much scope here for a study of the history of CIWTC, which was severely affected by the condition of waterways and by road transport development. The National

Waterways system that began in the 1980s with five national waterways was expanded to 211 by the National Waterways Act 2016, making this a subject for the history of very recent events.

One of Charles' long-term correspondents was Bill Trout of Virginia, USA, who wrote about his exploratory holiday in India, reported in the journal *American Canals* in 1984. He was arrested in New Delhi for photographing a picture in a book without a permit, although "The librarian himself held the book open in the sun" for him. Bill Trout made it clear that there was much more to find. For instance, the Eastern Jumma Canal, developed after 1925, had included locks and other structures that controlled its flow through falls, but he could not ascertain whether there had been locks at other sites on a waterway upon which navigation had long been abandoned.

### Worldview

Australia has its own canals society, but this is interested in waterways worldwide, especially those in Britain. Australia itself features coastal waterways and lakes, and sections of navigable inland waterway, but the only major waterway to feature commercial navigation, is the Murray River. Charles Hadfield never visited this himself, but his friends Brian and Marty Seymour did so in 1977 to gather information. The files also contain copies of articles in *Sea Breezes* (1984), *Waterways World* (1980) and *Lloyds List* (1985), along with technical articles on the barrages (with locks) that 'tamed' the river. Like its American counterpart, ACS has since discovered short canals that were unknown to Hadfield, and more history may well be uncovered.

Of all Hadfield's collections, his World Canals archives show the greatest scope for widening, deepening and updating, using original archival sources and studies, and publications produced in the last 35 years. Charles Hadfield's major task set out a challenge that has only partly been answered; while he was disappointed by the reaction to his book, interest has grown since, with online sources, greater travel and understanding of non-English languages. Examination of his collection would make a useful start to further studies.



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A decorative boatwoman's box has museum staff scratching their heads. SARAH HENSHAW finds out more

# ISABELLA SALT'S CHEST

“The mystery,” says Zofia Kufeldt of Ellesmere Port’s National Waterways Museum, “is why the chest is inscribed with that date – July 1891. We originally thought this could have been the couple’s 25th wedding anniversary, but the dates don’t quite add up.”

She’s referring to the wooden chest once belonging to boatwoman Isabella Salt, which now forms part of the museum’s collection of traditional canal art. It’s an unequivocally beautiful object – the lid hand-painted with one of the colourful castle motifs found on many canal craft of the time, while a village scene adorns the front face, complete with babbling brook. Floral decoration fills up the other two sides.

Inscribed on the front edge is the name ‘Isabella Salt’, while on the back is *that* date, July 1891.

## From Banbury to boats

Thankfully, it’s much easier to piece together other parts of Isabella’s life. Research undertaken by one of the museum’s volunteers, Carole Must, revealed she was born in 1845 in Grimsbury, formerly a hamlet in Northamptonshire, but transferred to the parish of Bodicote, Oxfordshire, in 1889. These days it’s a largely residential area forming the eastern part of Banbury, but for centuries the village was quite separate. Isabella, long before she



Salt Union boats *Dane* and *Anderton* at the Anderton Lift. R&CHS Collection

married George Salt and moved afloat, would have been familiar with the water, for her birthplace lies just east of the River Cherwell and Oxford Canal.

George himself hailed from Barlaston, Staffordshire, and it was in this neck of the woods – on the Trent & Mersey – that the couple were to spend most of their married life. In one of those lovely incidences of nominative determinism (when the name fits the job) they were employed by Salt Union Limited – a cartel of salt manufacturers with works in England and Northern Ireland. The enterprise was established in 1888 when the UK salt industry was floundering due to massive overproduction. Some 64 separate producers were amalgamated under the scheme, with in excess of 70 boats acquired from various salt manufacturers and other owners. Salt Union later established its own dock at Marston, and its boats carried that address on their cabin sides.

But aside from these basic details, the Union’s fleet had very little external decoration, and archive images show the extraordinary lengths to which crew went to make their boats more homely. Cabin doors, cabin blocks and top planks all invariably received a lick of paint, and roses and castles decoration. Isabella’s chest would have been a chip off the proverbial old block. It’s thought her cabinet was used to store clothes, and there’s a key hole in the front of the chest to keep possessions safe from prying eyes or light fingers. We can well imagine the utility of such a feature, for George and Isabella had a staggering 12 children between them aboard, although only seven actually survived.

## Making ‘census’ of her life

The museum has very little else with which to flesh out their early family life until 1891, which fortuitously was also the year of a UK-wide census. Isabella was by then aged 47 – three years younger than her husband. The records show five children still living aboard,



See Isabella’s box for yourself at the National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port.



The box is dated July 1891.

ranging from 18 years old (George) to nine (Richard). Between them they worked four boats all evocatively named after Scottish islands: *Arran*, *Bute*, *Stroma* and *Sanda*. On census night they were moored at Salt Union’s Marston dock.

Two other censuses followed; the first, ten years later, shows both boys still living aboard but only two boats – *Stroma* and *Sanda* – being worked. Another son, Frederick, was now employed by F.J. Abbott and was in Huskisson Dock, Liverpool, on census night, recorded as master of a barge called *Albion*. There are no details about the rest of the children, nor what happened to the other two boats.

By 1911, Isabella and George had retired, with the census suggesting they remained in Marston but had moved to a three-bedroom canalside property which they shared with their 26-year-old daughter-in-law Florrie Salt and their one-year-old grandson Henry. Florrie’s occupation is recorded as boatwoman.

The chest, we presume, remained with Isabella until her death. For what reason it was gifted to her in July 1891 will remain, we presume again, unsolved. How fitting then, that the same month saw the publication in *Strand Magazine* of Arthur Conan Doyle’s very first Sherlock Holmes mystery. That, too, centred on a mysterious woman – one Irene Adler – who famously got the better of him. Who knows what the shrewd detective would have made of Isabella Salt’s own brine-teaser...

(With special thanks to the National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port, for help compiling this research.)



**MARY KELLY** explores her family's long involvement with inland boating in the North West



# THE PRESTON FAMILY OF MIDDLEWICH

**M**y father, William (Bill) Preston, was featured in Chris Jones' 'Famous Fleets' article on two Trent & Mersey carriers (*NB* Autumn 2018). In 1932 he left school at the age of 14 to work with his father (also William) on J. & G. Meakins' pottery boat *Alice*.

So far, I have traced my paternal family line back to 1837. My great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather were also called William Preston and were boatmen. All of them were based in Middlewich, which is

where I was born and grew up. I was the last of the line to have 'William Preston, boatman' as my father's name and occupation on my birth certificate.

By the time my brother was born, Meakins had stopped using boats and my father worked in Seddons salt works in Middlewich. *Alice* was sold into private ownership and converted to a pleasure craft. My brother remembers taking Dad to see her in Market Drayton in around 1978/79 and she was in a very bad state then. I believe that she was broken up shortly afterwards.

Above: My grandfather with Jack, the boat horse, in Brooks Lane, Middlewich. My great-grandfather William and his wife Mary raised 11 children at 25 Brooks Lane. I'm not sure how many boats the family were operating at the time, but at the start of World War I my grandfather was being helped by boatman Arthur Brooks. Arthur signed up for service with the Cheshire Regiment in December 1915 and gave 25 Brooks Lane as his address on his attestation papers. Later he was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps and died at the battle of Passchendaele on 16th August 1917, aged 22. He is remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial.





*Alice with a grey boat horse. Dad said that the horse came from the Polish army, where part of its training involved swimming across rivers in full tack. He told the tale of the horse being startled near Harecastle Tunnel and jumping into the canal. The water there is discoloured by iron ore and the grey horse was orange for several days afterwards.*

### Middlewich

Many working canal families had houses in Middlewich. Children from these families married into the Preston family. My grandmother was from the Estcourt family, and my great-grandmother from the Hickson family. Other canal families included Hollinshead, Scragg, Littlemore and Bunn. Houses in Booth Lane, which runs alongside the Trent & Mersey Canal, were built in the early 1900s especially for canal workers and their families. The bricks were made from earth in a field behind the houses. When I was growing up there, the field was a children's playground, known as 'The Bricky'. Each house had a stable in the backyard for the boat horse. Other canal families lived in Brooks Lane, which crossed the Trent & Mersey Canal near to its junction with the Shropshire Union Canal. The Booth Lane houses are still there, but most of the Brooks Lane houses have been replaced by industrial units.

### Circus tricks

The proximity of Booth Lane to the canal once led to an unusual encounter for *Alice* in her horse-boat days. Grandad was walking with the horse as they made their way along

the canal next to the road. A man on a horse was riding along Booth Lane, travelling in the opposite direction to *Alice*. He called out to Grandad, "Hold on to your horse, mister. The circus is coming!" Grandad replied that the horse wasn't afraid of anything, but the sight of elephants walking along the road was enough to startle even a confident boat horse!

Even after he finished working on the canals, Dad still retained his love

and enthusiasm for all things canal related. When I was very small, I can remember Dad and Grandad setting off on their bicycles, with me on an improvised seat on Dad's crossbar, to see *Alice*. It must have been in the mid-1950s and by then *Alice* had been converted into a pleasure craft.

### Once a boatman...

Dad would often talk to my brother and me about the hard work of being a boatman. He said that Grandad would get up at 4am so that *Alice* could be first in the queue for the locks. This routine of work on the canals was hard for Dad to shake off – he once took my mum and brother on a canal 'holiday' and did the Cheshire Ring with two days to spare! If the boats couldn't operate for any reason, such as when the canal was iced over, Dad would have to take the horse for a walk every day so that its legs didn't swell up from standing in the stable. Converting *Alice* to a motor-boat helped reduce the workload considerably, but the Bolinder engine could still be temperamental first thing in the morning.

My mother, Nancy, came from Barnton. She lived near Anderton Lift



*The view from a horse-drawn Alice on the move.*



# Tracing family history



Decoration on Alice's cabin doors.

and would go to meet Dad when *Alice* was passing through. Most of Mum's family worked for ICI at its Winnington factory, but one of her brothers, Jim, worked on the ICI Weaver boats and told tales of frightening times in Liverpool during World War II air raids.

*Alice* in her horse-boat livery. Dad said that this bay boat horse used to love treacle butties. My grandmother would have one ready for him when he returned to his Booth Lane stable. If the service was a bit slow, and he got the chance, he would even try to get in through the kitchen door.

After the death of my parents, I found canal-related documents, newspaper cuttings and photographs while clearing their house. I still have Dad's Kodak No 2 'Hawk-Eye' Star box camera. All the photographs that accompany this article were taken by him. I suspect that he got the camera in around 1934, so any pictures involving boat horses were taken between then and 1944, when *Alice* was converted to a motor-boat.

I have started to digitise and archive the material, which is very much an ongoing project, while continuing to research my family history. The collection can be viewed at [www.tinyurl.com/PrestonFamilyCollection](http://www.tinyurl.com/PrestonFamilyCollection). Chris Jones has already commented on two photographs (p42 & 43, *NB* Winter 2018), and I am grateful for his help in supplying information about the professionally taken photographs that I found.





A good view of *Alice's* cabin doors, with her new livery as a motor-boat.



*Alice* approaching Weston Point Docks. Up ahead can be seen the former Anglican parish church of Christ Church, Weston Point, which was built in 1841 for Weaver Navigation employees. The Grade II-listed structure was declared redundant in 1995. It now stands within the port of Weston and is inaccessible to the public.

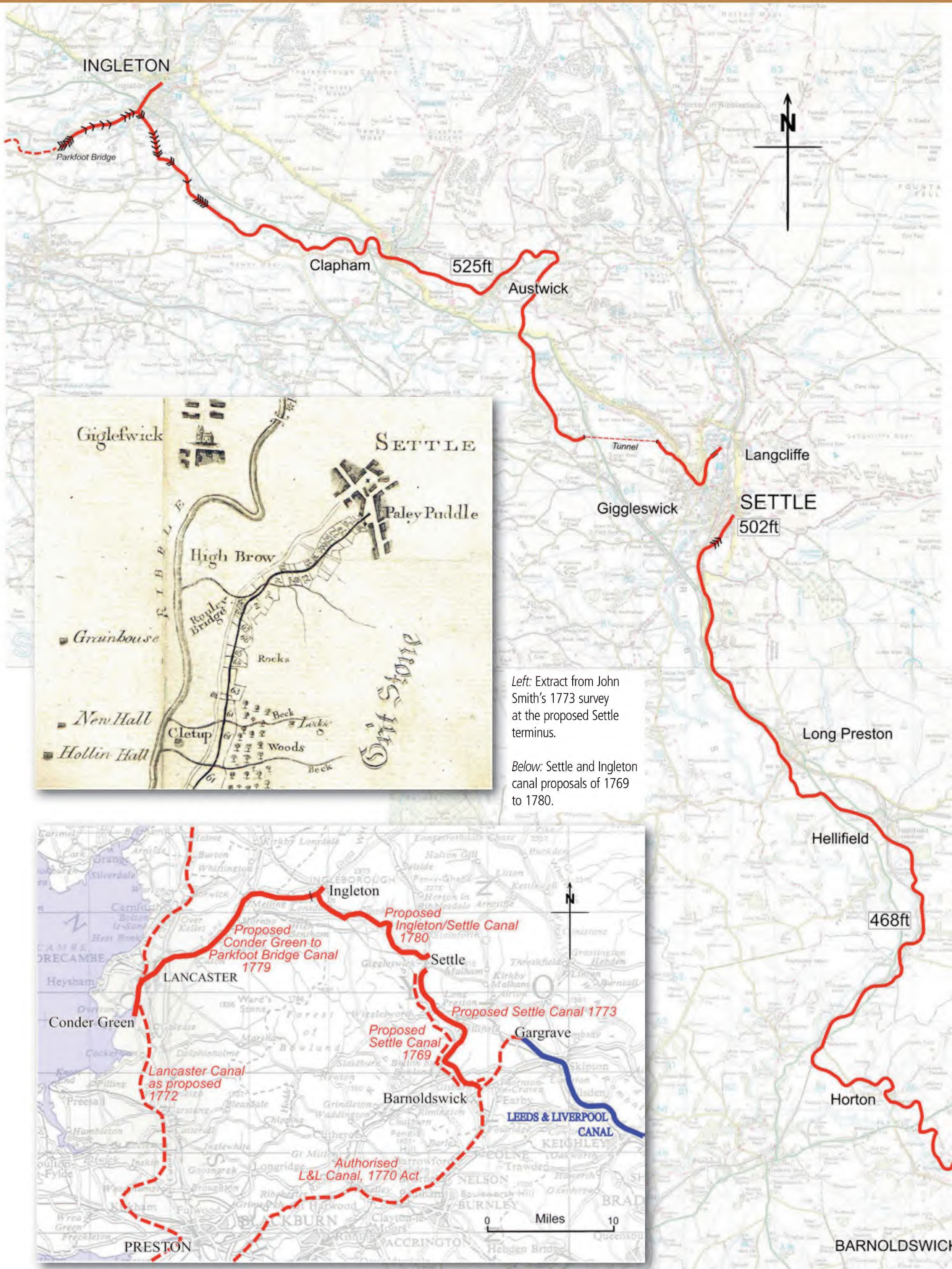


The Oslo-registered ship *Dana* in Weston Point Docks. Runcorn Transporter Bridge can be seen in the background.





# Canals that never were



Left: Extract from John Smith's 1773 survey at the proposed Settle terminus.

Below: Settle and Ingleton canal proposals of 1769 to 1780.



## RICHARD DEAN describes canal proposals in the Craven area of Yorkshire

# SETTLE AND INGLETON

The earliest idea for a 'Grand Canal' between Liverpool and Leeds in the 1760s envisaged a fairly direct route connecting to nearby towns by branches (see *NB Autumn* 2009).

One of these branches, laid out by the engineer John Longbotham in 1769, was from near Marton to the outskirts of the market town of Settle. Although no plan has survived, the route is described as having an aqueduct over the River Ribble at Newsholme, and with no locks other than one down into the main canal. This is curious as the alignment would have been at, or near, the 425ft contour, which is considerably *below* the Marton pool of the canal as later built. The Leeds & Liverpool proprietors eventually decided to leave construction of branches to others, and their Act of 1770 authorised only the main line.

In 1773 building of the Yorkshire end of the canal was well under way, and the Settle scheme was revived as an independent project, with John Smith as engineer. It was decided to keep the canal entirely to the east side of the Ribble Valley and, by avoiding a river crossing, this allowed the line to be laid out rather higher – about 468ft above sea level, meeting the intended L&L at Greenberfield Locks, at a level that would have been part way up the originally intended three-rise staircase. It may have been this that prompted the division of the proposed locks into a two-rise and a single, with a short pound between, as later built (all of which were bypassed in about 1820 to reduce water loss from the summit). The elevation also brought the line nearer to Settle, with the three locks there taking it up to a terminus in the town.

Contact with landowners revealed far more opposition than expected. It was felt that the scheme was rushed, and an associated proposal to take Lancashire water through it from the Ribble watershed to feed the proposed Leeds & Selby Canal in Yorkshire was not viewed favourably. An initial approach was made to Parliament in 1774, but without sufficient landowners in support it was clearly not appropriate to proceed with the Bill.

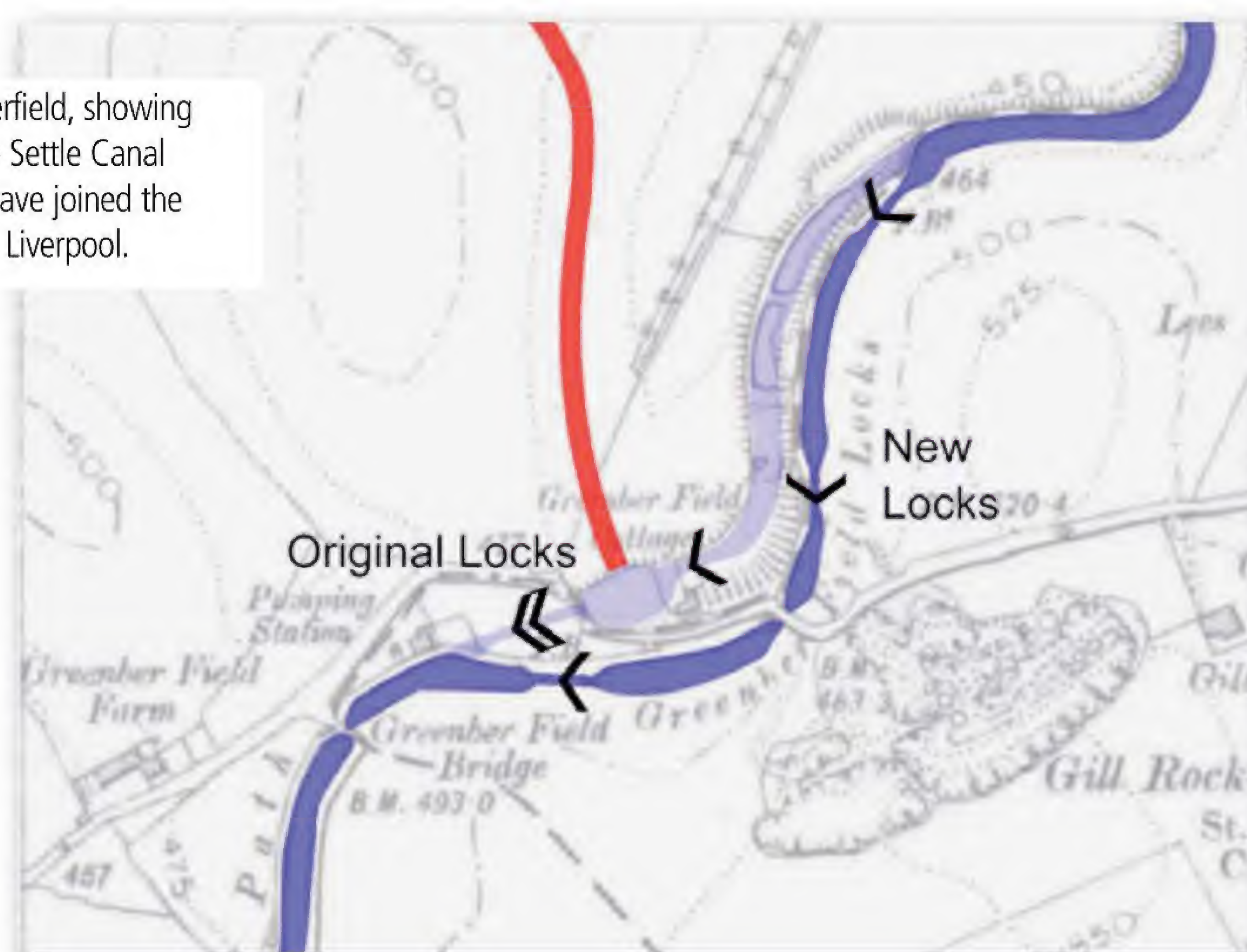
A very different scheme appeared a few years later. The canal, which had been proposed in 1772 from the L&L through Preston to Kendal, would have brought good supplies of coal to Lancaster. After that scheme stalled some merchants there envisaged a new dock on the Lune Estuary at Conder Green in 1779, with a canal through the town and up the Lune Valley with 248ft of lockage to a basin at Parkfoot Bridge below Ingleton, to which coal could be brought from the little collieries in the area. This was estimated to cost nearly £56,000, and was probably intended for smaller boats, but although an engineering report was made, no copy of the plan seems to have survived. This, in turn, prompted surveys the following year for a waterway climbing a further 270ft from Parkfoot up to Ingleton town and on through Clapham to Settle. But money was short for such speculative schemes, and by the time of Canal Mania a decade later, attention was concentrated again on the much more useful Lancaster Canal.

### Acknowledgement

Thank you to Mike Clarke for help, including his book *The Leeds & Liverpool Canal* (Milepost Research, 2016) which covers the schemes set out here.



Greenberfield, showing how the Settle Canal would have joined the Leeds & Liverpool.





# SINGLE HORSE-BOATING ON THE GRAND JUNCTION

Two images taken before WWI provide a glimpse into an age when towing a single loaded boat by horse from Brentford to Birmingham was all in a day's work for experienced boaters

**Below:** One of the biggest carriers operating from Brentford was Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd, which had its own wharf and warehouse facilities adjacent to the double gauging locks shown here, as its horse-boat *Tivdale* prepares to get underway.

When this image was taken she was practically new, having being built of wood at FMC's own dock at Waterloo Road, Uxbridge, in January 1911, costing £140. It is rare to see a craft in such pristine condition with new paintwork and cloths and hardly

a scratch or stain on them. The bare trees in the distance suggest that this picture may have been taken in the spring of that year, before the daily wear and tear of working a boat had left their mark. The image also allows us to study the decorative paintwork







on the doors and cabin block, which is easily overlooked with FMC craft. The features are typical of boats on the southern Grand Junction Canal but without the flair of boatyards patronised by smaller carriers, such as at Braunston.

Like many other craft built by FMC, *Tividale* had a fore-cabin, which provided necessary extra accommodation for her crew to comply with the regulations under the Canal Boats Acts. She was one of a class of vessels built by FMC and named after towns, and was registered on 31st December 1911, entering service captained by James Meese and his family. Working only as a single horse-boat, she regularly carried sugar and syrup from Brentford to Birmingham, loading about 24 to 25 tons.

Sugar was staple cargo between London and the Midlands for FMC. It was loaded at the Silvertown refinery of Tate & Lyle Ltd on the bank of the River Thames in London's East End. After being towed upriver behind a steam tug to Brentford, progress continued under horse power for the rest of the trip. Sugar was carried in either bags or cases and obviously had to be kept dry under cloths. Poorly maintained or badly fixed cloths could let rainwater in, as could the wash from paddles when ascending

locks. This sometimes did happen and the boatmen could be forced to pay compensation as cargo insurance was not generally used. After arriving in Birmingham, the produce was distributed to businesses and shops around the city and Black Country area.

How long the Meese family worked this boat is unknown but an inspection of the craft on the Erewash Canal in February 1912 showed that another of FMC's captains, William Palin, had taken charge of her.

FMC owned *Tividale* for 23 years before selling her off. She was bought directly from FMC by owner-boatman Charles Ward on 28th August 1934, and spent her later years carrying coal.

**Above:** After leaving Brentford, *Tividale* is underway on the Grand Junction. This view of a single horse-boat on the GJC would have been a common sight at any point since the canal was completed, when both fly- and slow-boats were operated singly.

In the cold winter weather, the horse driver has thoughtfully thrown a blanket over his charge. Note the portion of towing path cut away from the sloping side. This appeared at various places along the cut and was there to enable horses that might have fallen into the canal to safely climb up the gradual slope.



# Readers' letters and queries

## Comment, Question or Criticism?

Don't hold back! Drop a line to the Editor: *NarrowBoat*, 151 Station Street, Burton-on-Trent DE14 1BG or email [robert.cowling@wwonline.co.uk](mailto:robert.cowling@wwonline.co.uk). Replies to readers' queries should be similarly addressed and will be forwarded.

### Cabin strings

I have been a curatorial volunteer at the Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum for years, guiding visitors and caring for artefacts. Explaining how every item on a working horse-boat has to have a purpose, albeit embellished and/or decorated, is an easy task. Reason can be seen for chimney chains, Turk's heads, jumping strings etc. But ask a visitor to suggest a use for cabin strings and I get some curious and interesting suggestions!

Your study of J.G. Meakin (*NB* Autumn 18) and the note in the following issue, presented some of the *best* images I have ever seen of cabin strings in use.

But is there a difference in practice between northern and southern fleets? Meakin's towline coils appear to be tied tight against the cabin cants. Barlow's *Jellicoe* (*NB* Winter 2018, p2) and FMC's *Tasmania* (*NB* August 2018, p41) have to me the familiar robust ornamental back-spliced string. The towline coil hangs on a round turn (I think the word is 'turn'). It lies away from the warm cabin side for better drying, and allows quick and easy one-handed release.

Could this be a subject for investigation into fleet practice or regional variation?

**Brian Mayland**

**Right:** Samuel Barlow's motor *Ian* and butty *Iona* at Stoke Bruerne, showing the coiled towline hanging against the motor's cabin.

**Below:** Members of the Ray family demonstrate their technique of how to coil a towline against *India's* cabin side.

*The decorative side strings hanging down against the cabin side were used for tying the coiled towline against the tumblehome, mainly during frosty weather. The radiant heat from the stove and chimney warmed the cabin side and kept any moisture in the towline from freezing at night so was ready to be untied and used the next working day. The towline was also hung there as it was the best and most convenient place to put it, regardless of weather. Like most things, the boaters decorated these side strings so when not in use they looked attractive hanging down below the chimney. Photos of boats on the south and north Midlands show the practice was used in both areas.*

*Acknowledgements to Lorna York, Lily Wakefield and Alice Lapworth.  
Chris M. Jones*





### Worsters and wussers

In Chris M. Jones's interesting article about narrowboats on the Upper Thames, he noted that the boats were known as Wussers. I think I can explain the origin of this term.

I am working with a group of volunteers to make the wonderful archive of the Stroudwater Navigation Company more widely available in support of the lottery-funded project that aims to reconnect the restored part of the canal with the main system. Just recently, a volunteer noted an entry in the company's minute book dated 23rd October 1833, in which a vessel was referred to as a 'worster'.

In earlier times, most coal from the Midlands came to the Stroudwater in barges from Stourport, but following the opening of the Worcester & Birmingham and Gloucester & Berkeley canals, there had been a steady growth in the use of narrowboats, which usually joined the Severn at Worcester. The Stroudwater clerks did not record exactly where in the Midlands a vessel came from and were content just to record where they joined the Severn. So it is easy to see how narrowboats became known by some as worsters and, when that name was passed on by word of mouth, others called them wussers.

I should note that use of this name was not universal. Other contemporary Stroudwater records refer to long-boats.

**Hugh Conway-Jones by email**

### Inspection boats

Thank you for Cath Turpin's enjoyable articles on inspection boats. I have another one to add. One of the boats on show at the Inland Waterways Association's National Rally at Leeds in 1981 was a newly built inspection boat for the directors of the Rochdale Canal Company. It was sumptuously fitted out – no expense spared – but I was rather puzzled as to what the directors would do with it, given that the only navigable section of the canal at that time was the notorious Rochdale Nine flight of locks through central Manchester. I didn't take note of the name of the boat. I wonder what became of it?

**John Smurthwaite, Leeds**

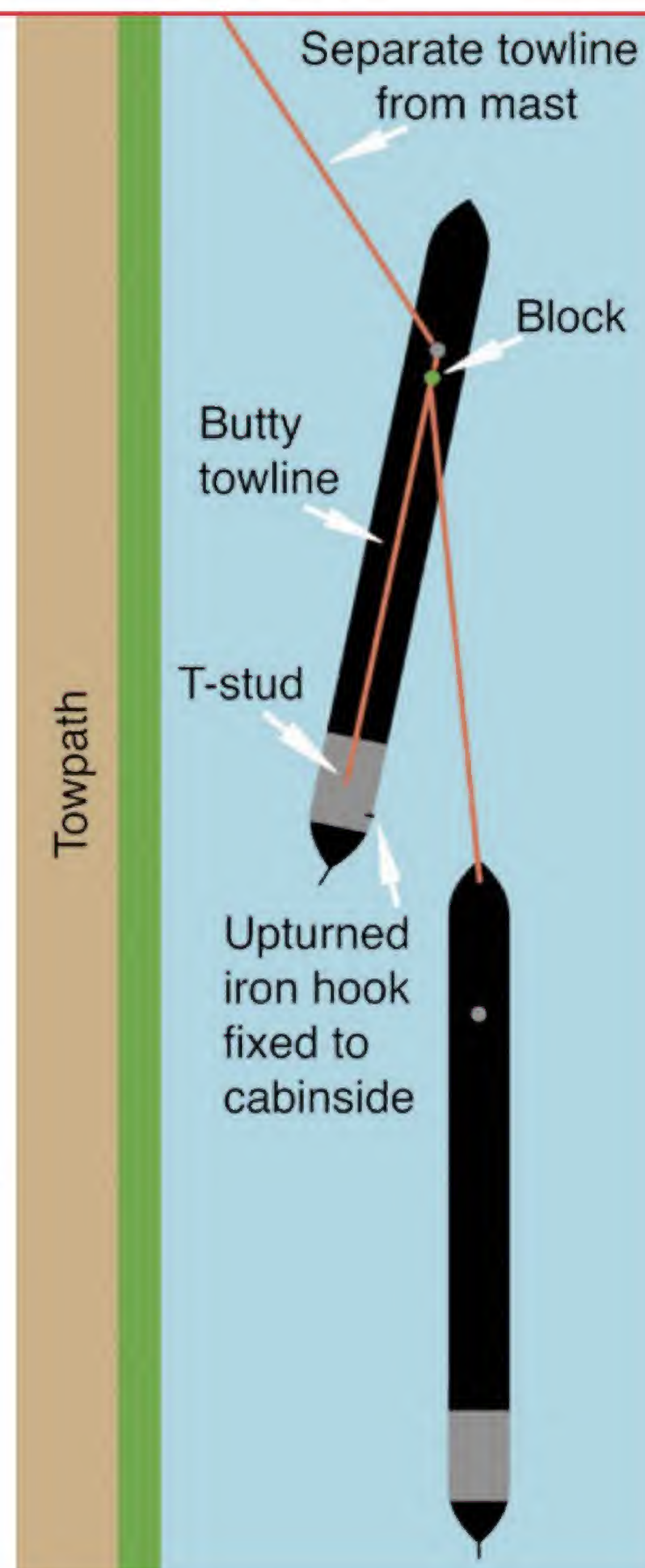
### Towing light

Regarding the letter 'Running light on the Oxford Canal' (*NB* Winter 2018, p45), I have no experience of horse-boating but I have some experience of working a motor and butty.

I think the clue to the logic for the towing line set-up is that the boats are unloaded, so are far more subject to side winds and have a lot less water across their rudders than if they were loaded.

It is normal when towing an empty butty with a motor to tow on cross straps so as to control the butty fore end. But with a motor the steerer can put the stern of boat where he likes; if a butty is towing a butty it cannot do this with the same certainty. The set-up illustrated gives the lead butty a much better chance of not being stemmed up on the outside of bends by the second butty dragging on its stern and so preventing it steering. I think in practice you would see the second butty on quite a short line and its steerer would have taken a parallel course around bends so as to minimise the need for the upturned hook on the cabin side.

**Colin Wilks by email**



### Location confirmed

Regarding the photo at the top of p10 (*NB* Winter 2018), the location quoted as "probably somewhere on the lower Grand Union" is perfectly correct, as it would appear to be a factory known to boatmen as Hayes Cocoa.

Originally set up by a company called Sandow as a manufacturing plant of cocoa, it was acquired by Nestle in the late 1920s and became its plant for the manufacture of instant coffee, i.e. Nescafé. The site closed in about 2014 and is currently being demolished for housing.

During both Sandow and Nestle's ownership, the factory received coal supplies by canal, and it is understood the children from the narrowboats loved the place due to the handouts of chocolate, particularly at Easter time.

**David Marks by email**





## Pleasure-boats through Standedge Tunnel

I found 'From the Archives' (NB Winter 2018) very interesting as it filled a gap in my knowledge of non-commercial/pleasure-boats passing through Standedge Tunnel, which I started to research after looking at *The Standedge Tunnel Book*. This records all passages through the tunnel after it reopened in 1894, when the final railway tunnel was complete.

The trips that I have identified are as follows:

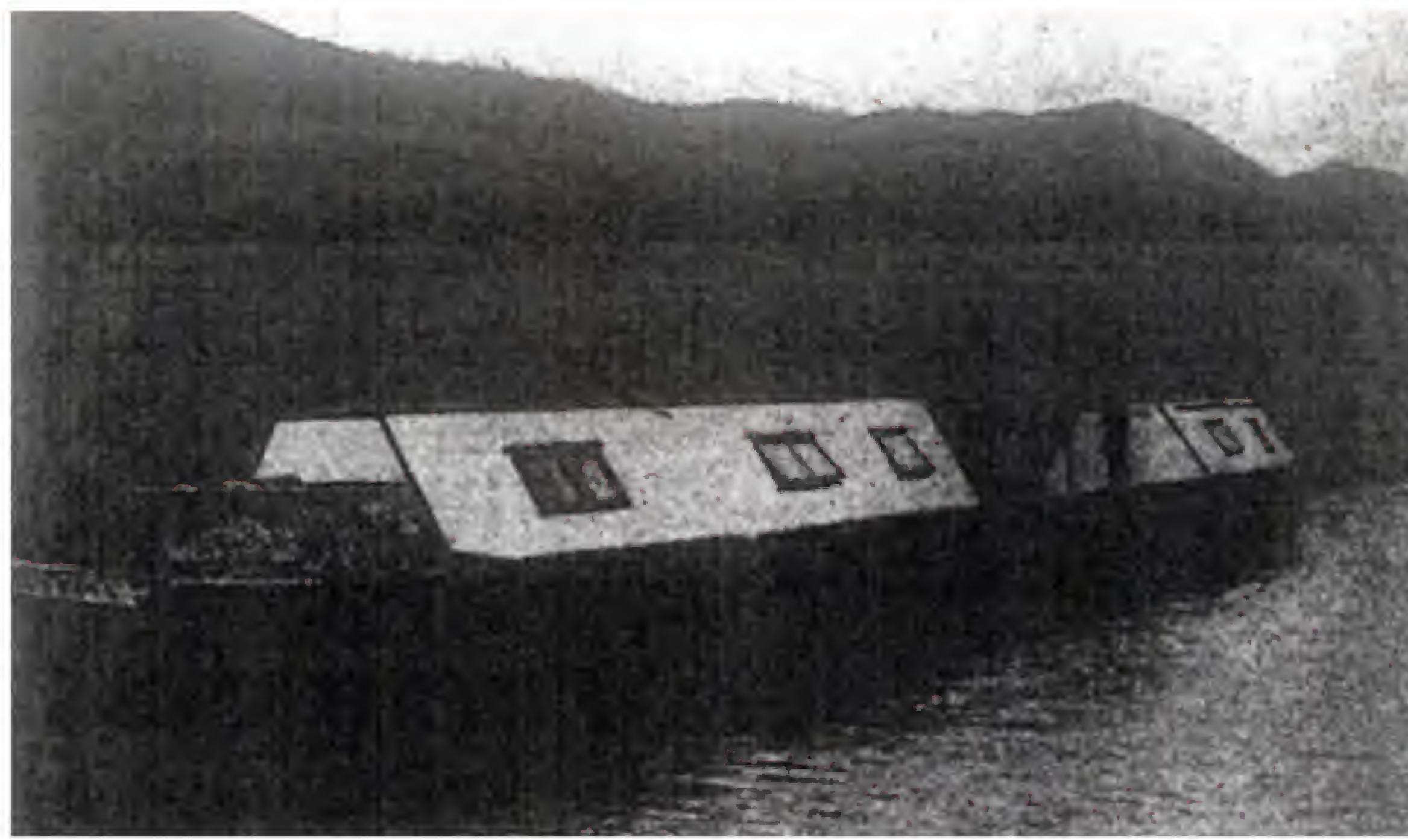
The first definitely identified passage, other than commercial craft, is a steam launch on 2nd May 1898, which was H.R. de Salis, director of Fellows, Morton & Clayton, in his boat *Dragonfly*. He entered the tunnel at Diggle at 6pm, but no time is recorded at Marsden. The trip can be identified from his 'Extracts from Log Book', in which he records: "Longest Tunnel travelled Standedge.... time taken to steam through 1 hour 33 minutes. May 2nd 1898", and then "Greatest total number of locks worked in one day, 65, being 42 narrow locks on Huddersfield Narrow Canal, 9 wide locks on Huddersfield Broad Canal, and 14 wide locks on the Calder and Hebble Navigation. May 3rd 1898". Assuming he didn't count the flood locks, this would have taken him to either Wakefield or Sowerby Bridge in the day. De Salis, of course, had a paid crew to do the work, which no doubt accounts for this progress.

The second entry in the tunnel book of a 'pleasure boat' is from Marsden to Diggle on 13th July 1899, taking two and a half hours. There is no information about the nature or ownership of this boat. Pure speculation on my part leads me to wonder about George Westall, who in his inland cruising book of 1908, having stated that "the proprietary [the then London & North Western Railway] decline to admit pleasure vessels of any kind", intriguingly goes on to say that "the long tunnel at Marsden is difficult to pass in small boats without damage from contact with the tunnel walls and can only be accomplished with great care, a plentiful use of fendoffs, and at a slow speed". Though there is no proof, he does sound as if he had personal knowledge of the tunnel and the date is about right.

Nothing else is recorded in the L&NWR era, or for some time after the 1923 railway grouping, when the ownership of the canal passed to the London, Midland & Scottish Railway, and there is nothing recorded for 1931. However, on 25th August 1932, at 2pm, 'Woodward's Motor Boat' is recorded as entering the bore at Marsden at 12.30pm and leaving at 2pm. Mr Woodward remains a mystery but from *The Listener* information in the Winter issue, and given the rarity of such passages, it seems likely that he may have been the companion of Professor Rich, who may have mistaken the year when he gave his talk in 1956.

'Carr-Ellison' is recorded on 21st July 1934, again at Marsden. Mr Carr-Ellison was a military man and a member of a Northumbrian land-owning family, which still owns extensive estates near Alnwick. An article on him appeared in the April 1997 issue of *Canal Boat*, though, sadly with not much information about his Huddersfield trip. Though there are 'ditto' marks under the words 'motor-boat' in the tunnel book, according to that article he would probably have been using the steam launch *Thetis* in 1934.

The final trip prior to World War II was by a Mr, or Dr, Greene. In NB Spring 2006, there was an article inspired by John Foley, who had discovered an item in an old issue of the *Glossop Chronicle* about a Gloucester doctor, who, in August 1937, had cruised from his home port intending to make the passage of Standedge Tunnel to reach Huddersfield. The article was accompanied



by a photograph of the narrowboat conversion *Success* moored in Ashton-under-Lyne. In the tunnel book, Greene is recorded as entering the tunnel at Marsden at an unreadable time on 20th August 1937 and leaving it at 1.20pm, then entering at Diggle at 10am on 21st and leaving at 12noon. I checked the microfilms of the local newspapers at Huddersfield Library looking for all three of the 1930s visits and soon found articles in both the *Huddersfield Examiner* and the *Colne Valley Guardian* on Greene, who seems to have been a self-publicist.

Greene didn't make Huddersfield, but it is apparent that the tunnel book entries are in the wrong columns, presumably due to a natural tendency to make the first entry on the left (Marsden) page. This is far from the only example of this error in the book, and as all of these later entries are under Marsden, it must put a question mark against other entries on that page, particularly Carr-Ellison. There is a very poor photograph in one of the newspapers of *Success* at Marsden, sensibly moored between the tunnel and top lock, away from the railway.

**Trevor Ellis by email**

## Painted stool

I could not be more delighted with the information you have unearthed (NB Winter 2018) – an almost identical stool and all the details of the painter is beyond expectations.

I have included this photo of the reverse side of the stool as I am not sure if this was included before, but as you will see it is almost identical to 'Dennis'.

Is Dennis in private hands, or available to see anywhere as it would be great to see the three stools together?

Please convey our thanks to Dave Moore and Roger Hatchard. Dave probably won't remember me but I attended one of his roses-and-castles courses many years ago and he also did a brilliant job of signwriting a boat for me.

**Ian and Mary Bennett by email**





### Stool info sought

I read with interest the article on page 44 (NB Winter 2018) on narrowboat stools and attach some pictures of an example recently purchased from an antiques centre in Topsham, near Exeter, on the River Exe.

I wonder if any readers have ideas of the origin of the painter or the inscription. Having been through back issues of *NarrowBoat* and various other waterway literature, my research shows a strong similarity to Frank Jones.

**Eddy Mayhew**



### Thames illustrations

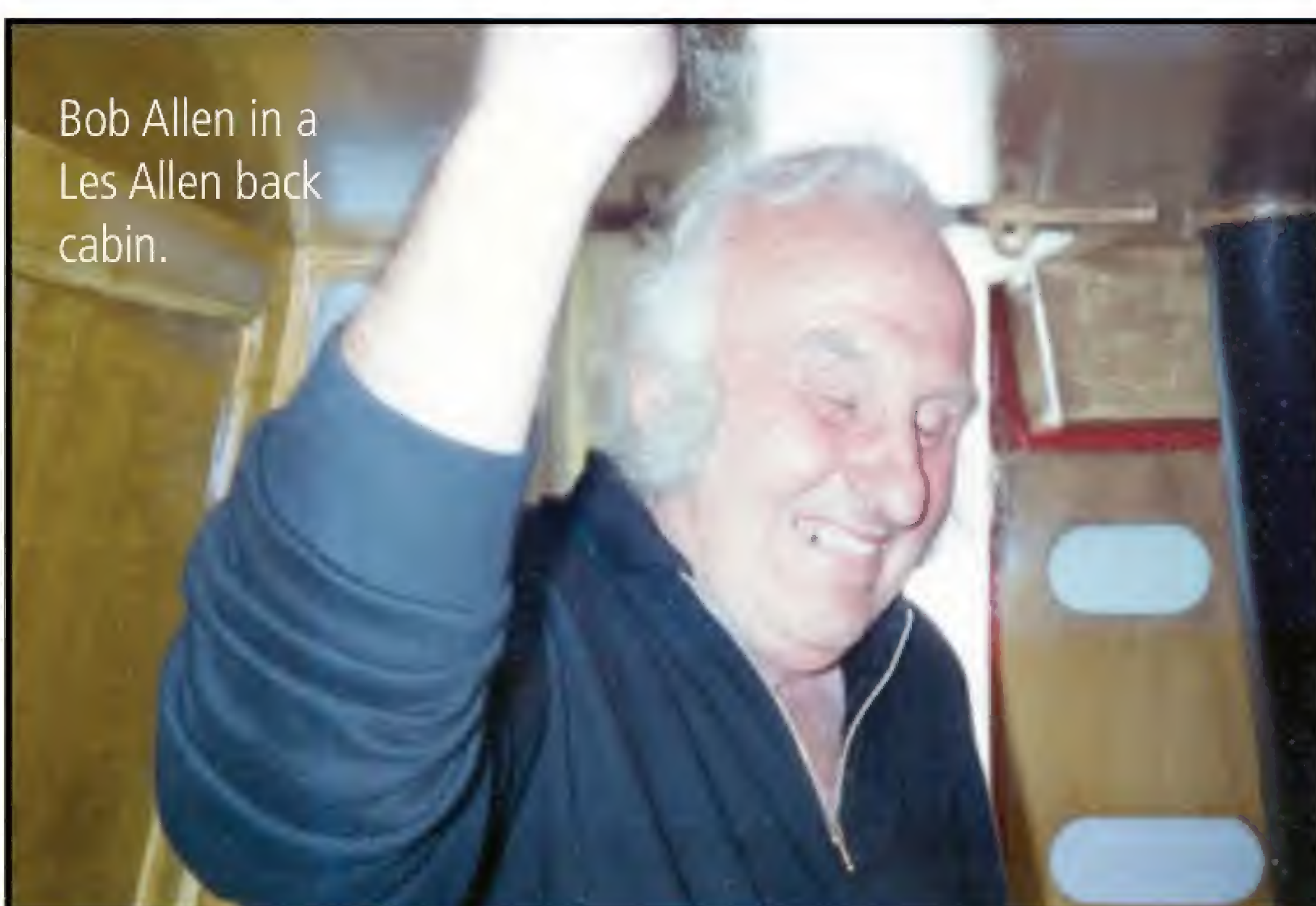
In the piece 'Pride of the Thames' (NB Winter 2018), the drawings by H.R. Robertson certainly capture the typical scenery on the river, especially north-west and south of Oxford, which I have known and loved since 1961.

I doubt if I am the only reader to be struck by the similarities in the pictures on pages 28 and 29. The illustrations of the girl and the boat seem to be almost mirror-images of each other. For example, the fold of her dress is left-over-right on p28, but right-over-left on p29. The 'bobble' (?) of her hat is over her right ear on p28, but over her left on p29. They are not 100% precise mirror-images, but I wonder if the artist used a plate negative each way up to help sketch the overall portraiture. Her expression is slightly different, as are lesser details on the boat, to avoid boring sameness.

**John Pearse, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire**







Bob Allen in a Les Allen back cabin.

## Obituary Bob Allen, 1930–2019

### Boat-builder and the last generation of the legendary Les Allen & Sons

Many friends of the waterways will have been saddened to hear of the death in January of Bob Allen, just short of his 89th birthday.

Les Allen & Sons was one of the few classic boat-builders that managed to make the leap from wooden craft to modern steel narrowboats, and Bob and his brother John were the third generation of the family to be involved in the trade. Grandfather Fred and father Les were both classic wooden-boat-builders, and Les moved from Spencer Abbot at Salford Bridge to Oldbury around 1951 to start his own operation, which became Les Allen & Sons.

Initially, the company carried on working on the wooden boats, which were the mainstay of the canal trade at the time. As the move towards steel began in earnest, the team had the foresight to train in welding.

Indeed, it was only Les's insistence that the family business should continue that kept both his sons away from British Leyland at Longbridge. The business prospered beyond his death in the late 1960s, until Bob and John, with no obvious successors or appetite for the new EU RCD paperwork, retired in 1997.

The far-from-glamorous premises were hidden behind a transport depot in the former wharves of T&S Element at Oldbury, later known as Valencia Wharf. From this unprepossessing location came a succession of beautifully crafted boats in a variety of styles, for both private and commercial owners.

Bob was a very sociable man, happiest when sharing his love of fine wines and dining with his wife Syb. The couple enjoyed a long marriage but Bob was reluctant to explain how a Black Country boy came to meet and marry an elegant Frenchwoman – replying to any query with a broad smile and his characteristic booming laugh.

The Allens Register was formed in 2001 to preserve the history of the firm and its many (never counted) boats. It is a testimony to Bob and his surviving brother John that the boats they produced continue to attract admirers to this day.

Adapted with thanks from BCNS *Boundary Post*.

## Roundhouse restoration begins

Work has begun on the restoration of the Roundhouse in Birmingham, the distinctive old canal-horse stables and warehouse that somehow survived, overlooked and unmodified, into the modern era.

The building is being brought to life by a partnership of the National Trust and the Canal & River Trust, paid for by a £2.5m National Lottery Heritage Fund grant with £196,000 from Historic England. The building is due to reopen in spring 2020 as a space for the local community and a centre for bike and canoe/kayak hire.

Commissioned by the City of Birmingham as part of a city improvement act, the Roundhouse was an early work by noted architect William Ward. He was not yet 30 when it opened in 1874, and he went on to design many other noted city buildings, including the elegant Great Western Arcade.

The latest restoration includes strengthening and restoring the roof, repairing and re-laying the cobbled courtyard and installing new feature windows giving views over the canal.

There's a very good description of the building's history, including excellent photographs, at [igersbirmingham.co.uk/igers-birmingham-visit-the-roundhouse](http://igersbirmingham.co.uk/igers-birmingham-visit-the-roundhouse).

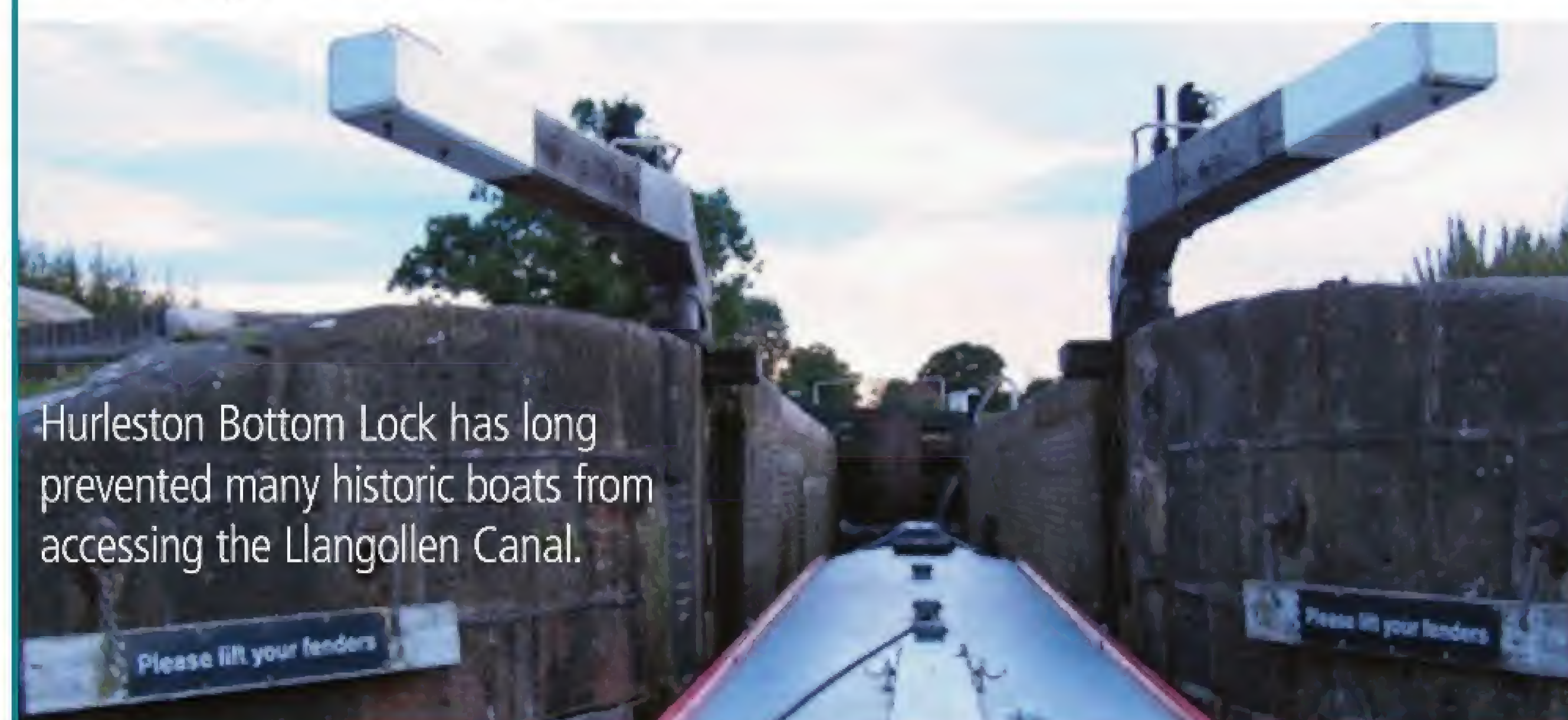


## Work on Llangollen pinch-point halted

Work to widen Hurleston Bottom Lock, the pinch-point at the entrance to the Llangollen Canal that has long prevented historic boats accessing the waterway, was halted early in January after the Canal & River Trust found the job would be more difficult than planned. The task has now been deferred until next winter.

Over the years the lock has gradually narrowed, to the point that it is impassable to boats over the modern standard of 6ft 10in. This includes many historic narrowboats built to the original 7ft beam but often spreading slightly in old age.

The job was expected to be completed in March, but CRT feared it could take until May, or even later. Because the Llangollen Canal is so popular, CRT decided to halt the work early and reopen the lock for now.



Hurleston Bottom Lock has long prevented many historic boats from accessing the Llangollen Canal.





## Award-winning historic boats

Every year at its AGM the Historic Narrow Boat Club gives two awards for the 'Most Improved' historic craft. The Keay Award, named after the last of the traditional wooden-boat-builders on the BCN, for wooden boats, and the Hemelryk Award for metal/composite boats.

There were several strong entries this year, and the work on them all has been carried out to a very high standard. Entries were judged by the committee on a number of criteria, including the quality of the work achieved, the originality of the materials used and the ongoing use of the boat.

This year, the Keay Award was won by the Clayton's tar-boat *Gifford*, owned by the Waterways Museum Society of Ellesmere Port. This boat is a unique survivor, being decked to carry tar and liquid cargoes in integral tanks, and being a wooden horse-boat. A routine docking for maintenance last year, intended to last seven weeks, turned instead to a nine-month part-rebuild, due in particular to finding a rare form of virulent wet rot.

Works carried out by Ade Polglase and Andy Cox of A.P. Boat Services included fitting 35ft of bottom boards with new opepe and replacing several parts of the deck, cants, part of the stem post, and bulkhead framing. A full repaint by Alvecote Marina, with resplendent signwriting by Phil Speight, finished off the restoration.

The 'Small Woolwich' *Corolla* received the Hemelryk Award. Built in 1935 as part of the GUCCC's ambitious expansion plans, it worked as a London water bus in the 1950s, before ending up as a derelict hulk at Foxton and, later, at Industry Narrowboats in Stretton. An extensive

programme of works was carried out by Dave Linney at Industry Narrowboats, with Tim Barrett, the owner, getting involved himself whenever possible. Works included rebottoming and refooting, plus a new Uxter plate, riveted engine room, and back cabin – albeit in steel rather than wood – based carefully on original dimensions. Brinklow Boat Services fitted the new wooden gunwales.

The boat carried its first load in many years – opepe bottom boards for *Canis Major* – and had new running gear made by Dan Cauldwell at Langley Mill boatyard. The restoration has put the boat back into carrying condition and Tim intends to load it as much as possible.

John Hemelryk, who the award is named for, did a huge amount of work on his own boat, ex-FMC *Peacock*, and in this spirit an honourable mention must be made to Jason Gallop of Bollington Boat Services, for his 'Small Woolwich' *Bargus*. Jason bought the boat in a run-down condition with a very dilapidated wooden cabin conversion. Working in his spare time, in the space of year Jason has removed the conversion, installed a new engine in the correct place, built a new cabin, and carried out some hull works, along with a vast array of other jobs. Installing new gunwales and running gear has meant that the boat is now once again carrying, working as a coal and diesel boat for Four Counties Fuels, alongside *Alton* and *Halsall*. Some of the work is temporary, to enable the boat to re-enter service, and there are more works to do. But Jason is to be commended for the enormous amount he has achieved so far.

**Amy Tillson**

## Obituary

### Ian McKim Thompson, 1938–2019

**Noted classic narrowboater, former chair of the Dudley Canal Trust and co-founder of the Russell Newbery Register**

Ian McKim Thompson became involved with canals as a child in 1948, when he would set off on his bicycle to follow working boats as they travelled through Knowle, near his home town of Solihull. The experience was to inspire his leisure activities for the rest of his life.

Born in 1938, he had a distinguished medical career, qualifying and serving as a doctor in Birmingham, and becoming a consultant pathologist and lecturer. But for waterways enthusiasts he is noted for his passion for canals and marine engineering. His best-known boat was *Temeraire*, built by Malcolm Braine and fitted with a Russell Newbery DM2. His family recall the fierce schedule he liked to keep when boating, inspired by the working boaters he saw as a child, or perhaps by his long hours as a doctor, often on the move before 6am.

Retirement simply gave him more time for his passion for all things canal, and in particular, with the classic Russell Newbery engines. Friendship with other RN enthusiasts eventually led to the formation of the Russell Newbery Register in 1994. Initially they made spares, but Ian felt the production of new engines should be

the goal. In 1998 he formed a revived Russell Newbery Company and obtained the tools and rights to the brand name. Although he sold the engine company in 2004, he remained closely involved with the register and became president in 2011.

Ian's support of canal societies dated back to the 1970s and he became president of the Dudley Canal Trust in 2014. At the IWA National Waterways Festivals he was usually the 'on call' doctor.



Ian McKim Thompson  
on *Temeraire*.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### 19th-22nd April

Tens of historic boats will be moored around the 7-acre site of the National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port for the annual **EASTER BOAT GATHERING**. The event will also include workshop tours, live music, activities and more.

[canalrivertrust.org/events](http://canalrivertrust.org/events)

### 18th-19th May

The **RICKMANSWORTH FESTIVAL** occupies the towpath between Batchworth and Stockers Lock, as well as part of the Aquadrome Park.

[rwt.org.uk/festival](http://rwt.org.uk/festival)

### 24th-27th May

The annual **CRICK BOAT SHOW**, which takes place at Crick Marina on the Leicester Line of the Grand Union, will see a small selection of historic craft on display.

[crickboatshow.com](http://crickboatshow.com)



Timothy West at the 2018 Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally.

### 1st-2nd June

**ETRURIA CANALS FESTIVAL** is held on the junction between the Caldon and Trent & Mersey canals, at the museum that's home to Jesse Shirley's steam-powered bone and flint mill.

[etruriamuseum.org.uk](http://etruriamuseum.org.uk)

### 29th-30th June

The **BRAUNSTON HISTORIC NARROWBOAT RALLY** is now in its 19th year and is always a great place to meet like-minded people. Events include a rally of surviving Fellows, Morton & Clayton boats, daily boat parades, music, food, trade exhibitors and much more.

[braunstonmarina.co.uk/events](http://braunstonmarina.co.uk/events)

## Paget-Tomlinson's *Waterways in the Making* republished

If you have ever pondered the construction of canals and how they have been kept navigable for well over two centuries, then this newly republished 1996 title from celebrated waterway historian Edward Paget-Tomlinson is, without doubt, the best and most easily accessible way to mug up.

Rather than detailed, lengthy descriptions, the late author (clearly an advocate of the philosophy that a picture is worth a thousand words) uses his own hand-drawn images to illustrate his points. His sketches also have the advantage of depicting scenes before the advent of photography, and from angles that cameras could not take. Every double-spread has one or more of these illustrations, which link to concise, well-written explanations.

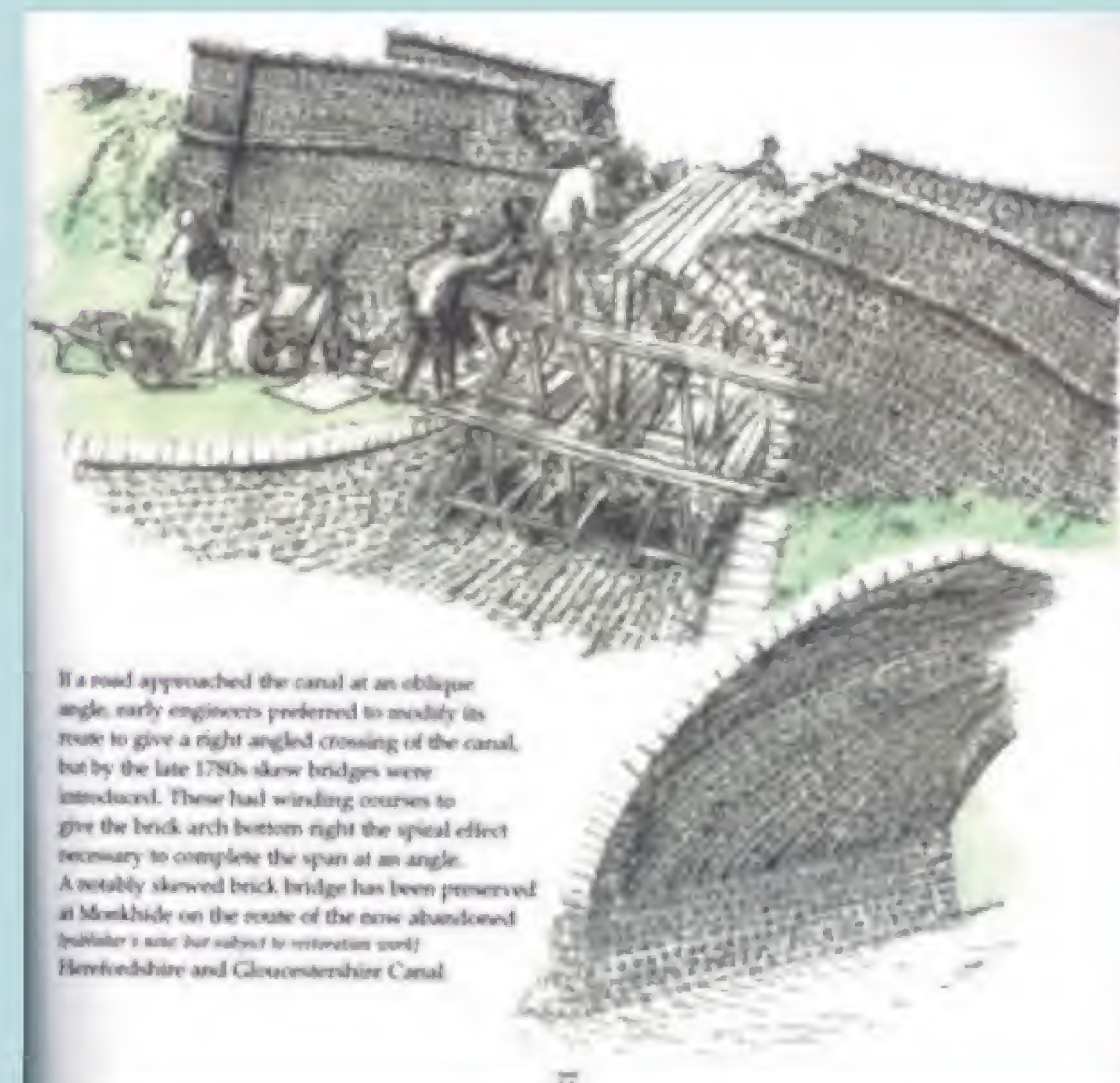
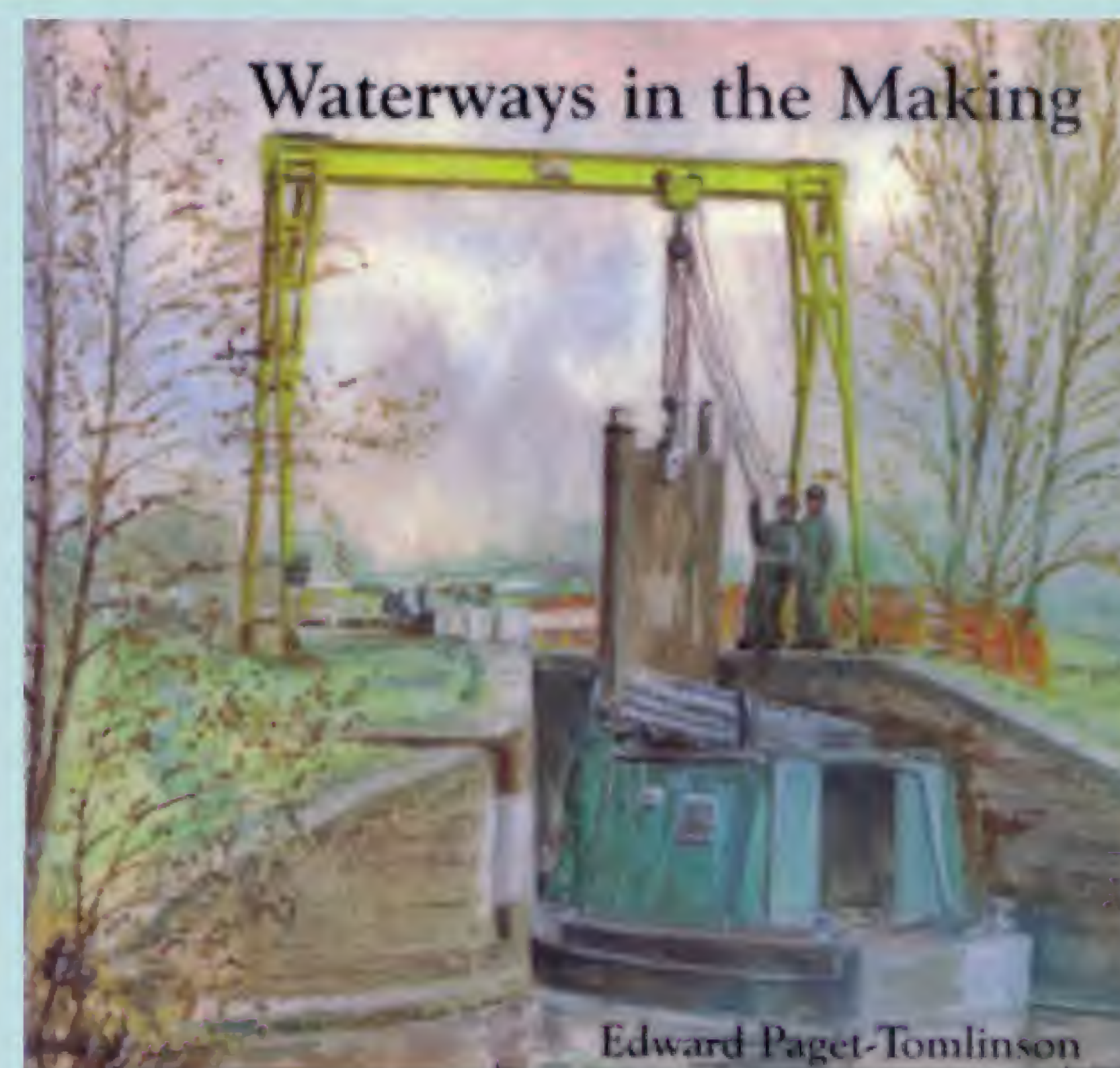
The topics covered are presented in a fairly linear fashion – from the earliest river improvements and development of locks, through

to the cutting of the canals and the specific structures that enabled them to travel across valleys and under or over hills. Their mode of use, and the convenience of various special features, such as split bridges, is also explored.

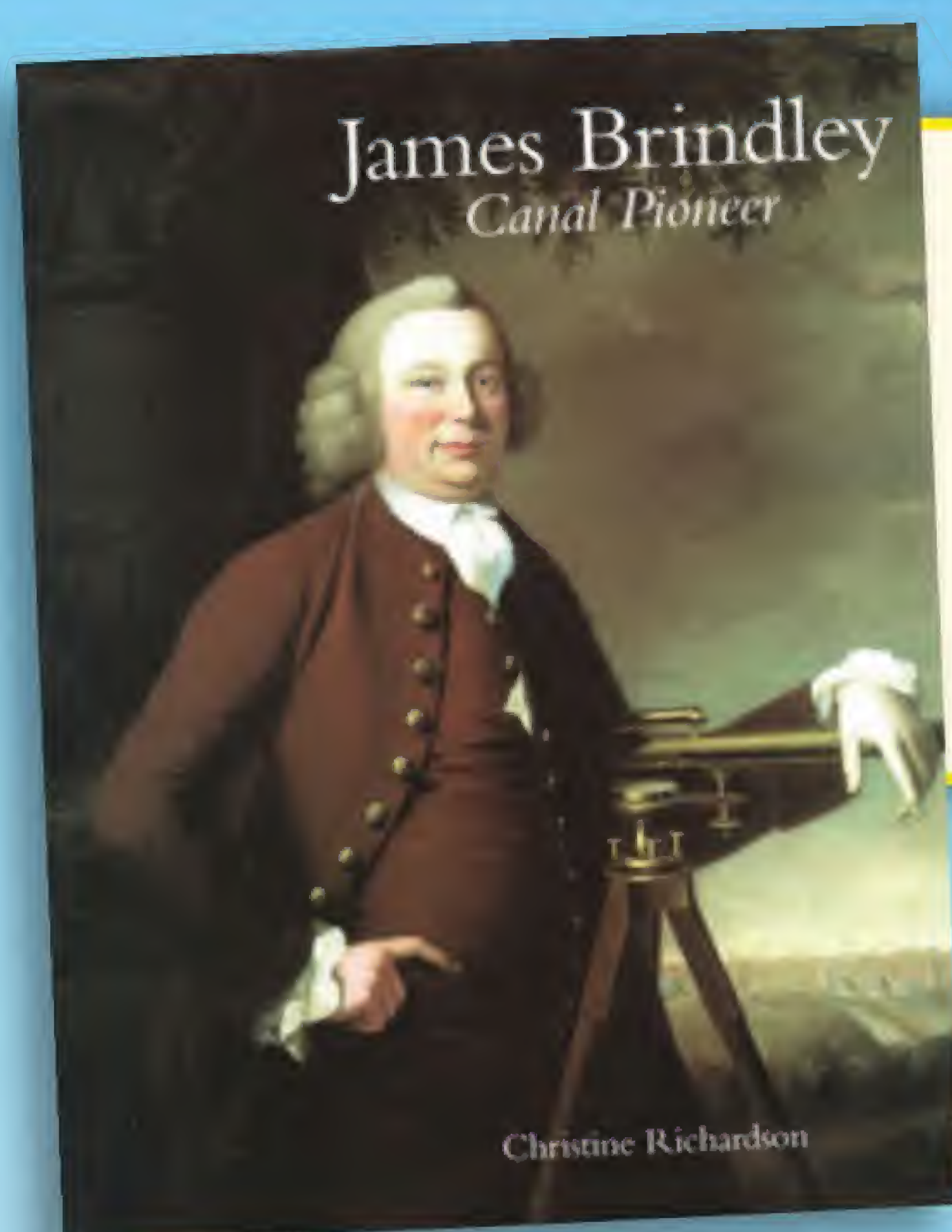
The real joy of this book is that it makes what would ordinarily be dense, technical subject matter into something that's light and enjoyable – almost like a children's book for adults. The challenges facing early canal builders and boaters – who had only primitive mechanisation and horse power at their disposal – becomes readily apparent, and although £15.95 may be a fair amount to pay for a paperback publication, it's well worth it for the information gleaned within.

*Waterways in the Making* is published by the CanalBookShop and is available from [canalbookshop.co.uk/01270 811059](http://canalbookshop.co.uk/01270 811059).

**James Francis Fox**



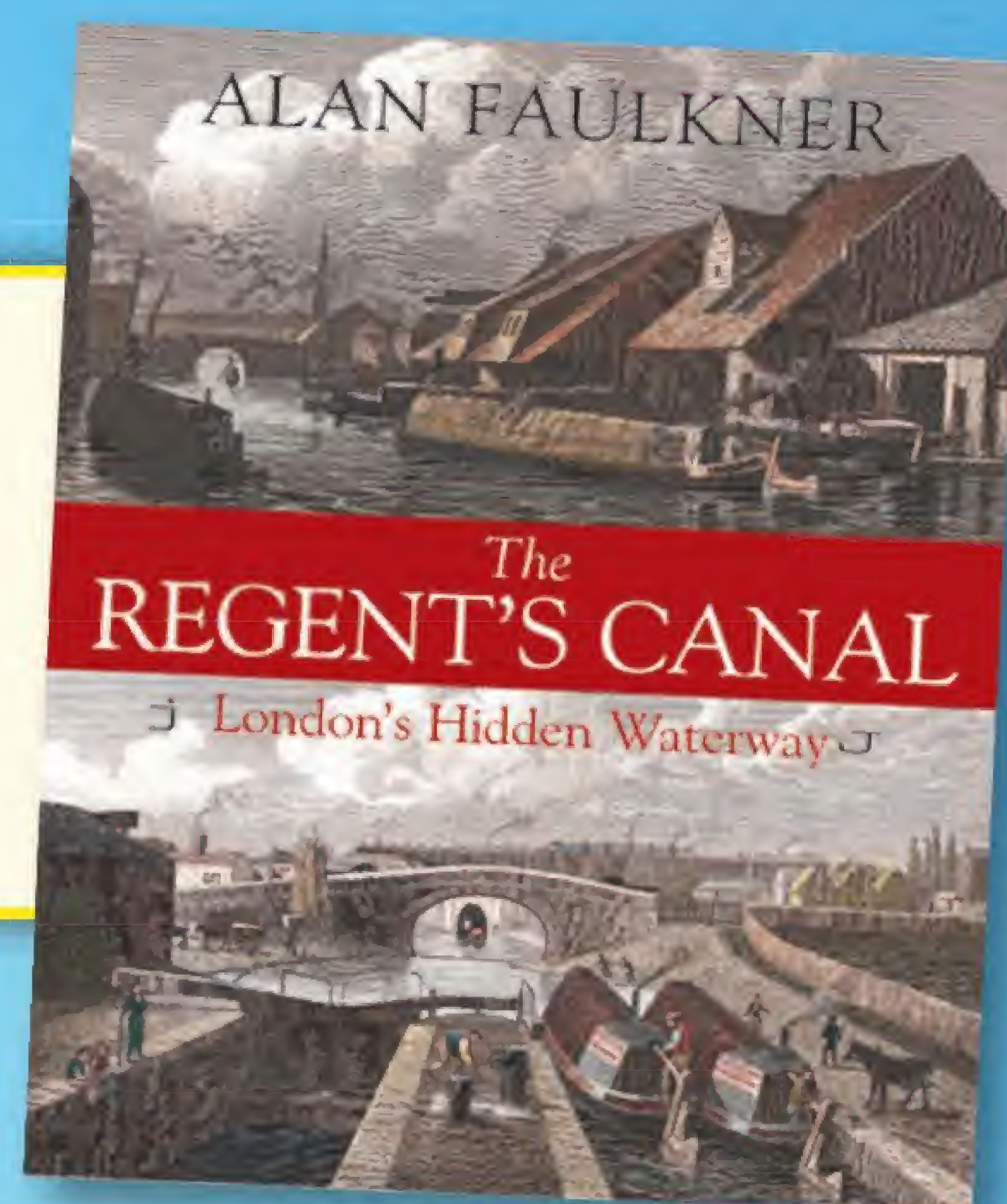




### **James Brindley: Canal Pioneer** **Christine Richardson**

In this book, Richardson places James Brindley's real story alongside that of the development of England's early inland waterways network. Christine Richardson has worked hard and to good effect to combine the fact and fantasy surrounding James Brindley into a very readable book.

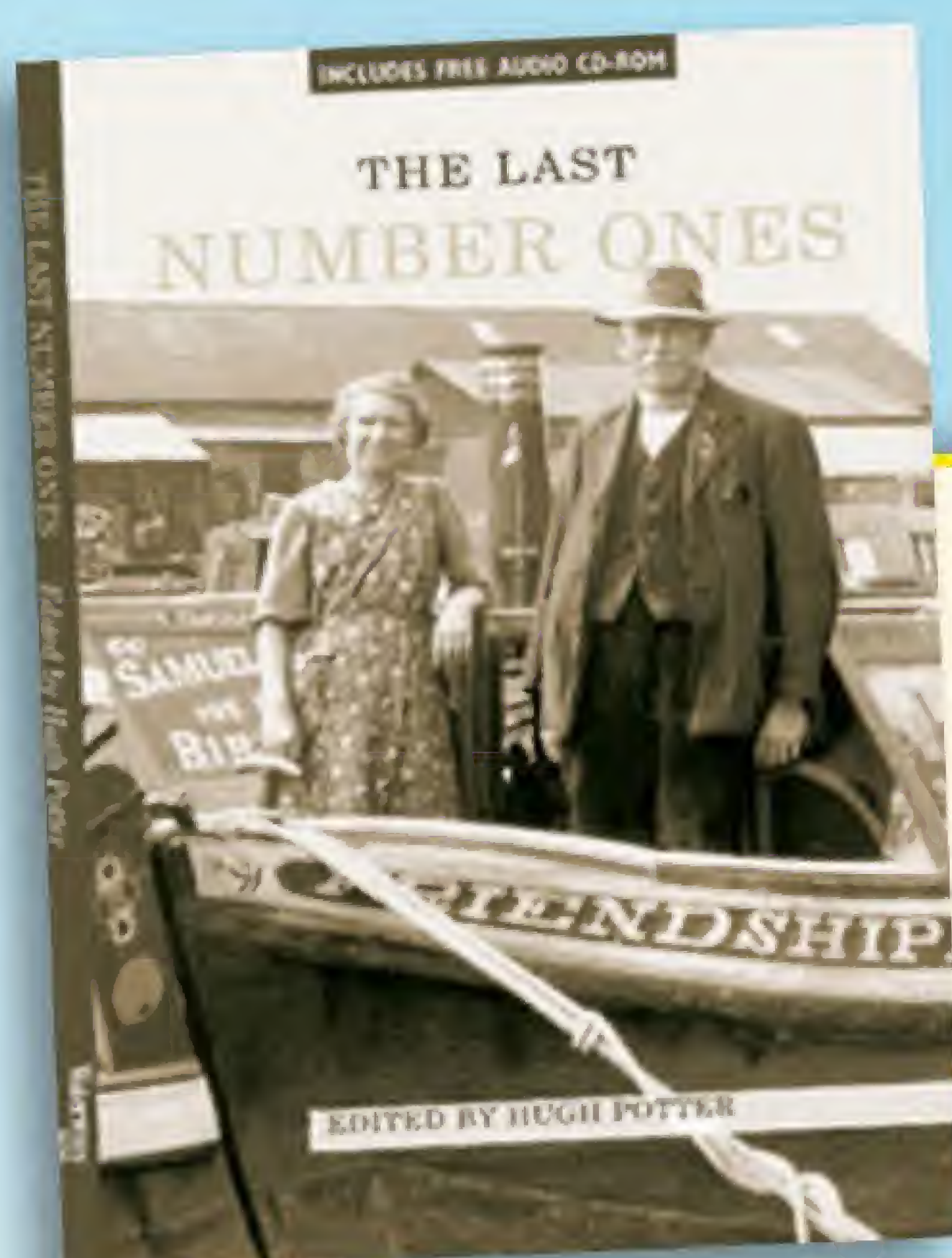
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### **The Regent's Canal: London's Hidden Waterway** **Alan Faulkner**

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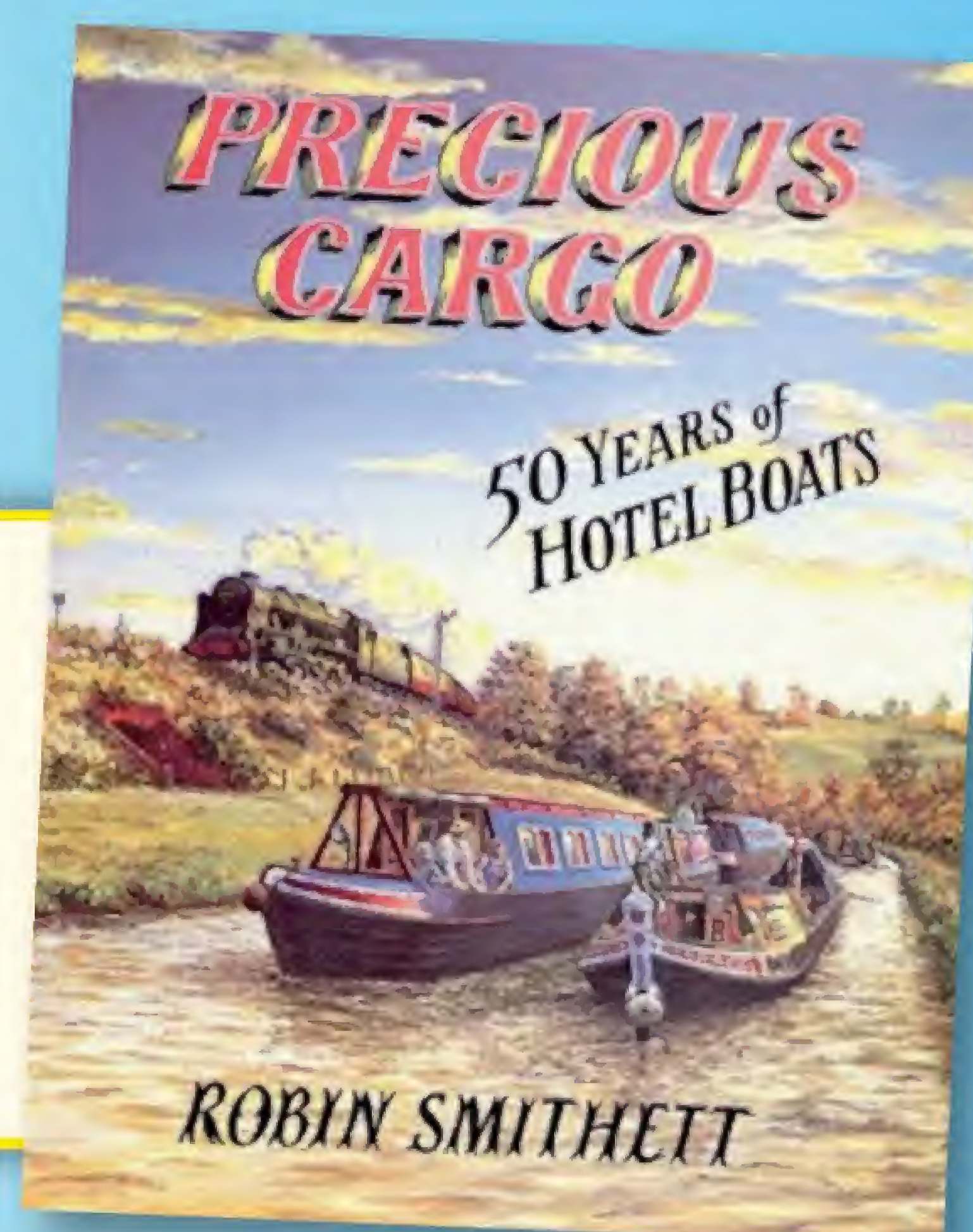


### **The Last Number Ones** **Edited By Hugh Potter**

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